

THE
PRINCE
OR
THE ROYAL LIBERTINES.

VOL. II.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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The Princess,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

The power of Beauty over Princes.—The Prince Charles makes a promise to the Marchesina Amphilisia di Medicis, in favor of the Prince Vicentio.



THE Marchesina di Medicis lost no time in making her suit to Prince Charles : he visited her as usual one evening, and she prepared the way to her request by new and irresistible fascinations. She played and sung to amuse her Prince, and by turns entertained him with little histories of the ladies and nobles of Italy; and at length told him that the Prince Vicentio had paid her a visit. At first

the Prince Charles reddened and seemed displeased, which was the very point the artful Amphilisia depended on. “No, my Prince,” said she, “do not be surprised, I never liked Don Vicentio; and although his visit was to me, his suit was to my Prince. The fool is in love, over head and ears in love.”—“I know,” replied the Prince Charles, “that Don Vincentio asked my consent to espouse the Countess di Simonetta, and I gave it—what would he have more?” “Why that without which, Prince, all that you have granted will avail him nothing: the Countess di Simonetta does not like him, and chuses, notwithstanding it would offend her father, to marry a cavalier who is not of the first nobility. Count St. Florentin is her lover. Now I wish very much to see this coxcomb Vicentio, who thinks every lady in Italy is in love with him, married to this Countess di Simonetta; I wish, my prince, that you would give me your promise never to consent to

her espousing any other person during his life.” “My love Amphilisia,” returned the Prince, “you know that I would almost grant you any thing, but this seems to me unnecessary: the Marquis di Simonetta, her father, will make her give her compliance, he is devoted to me.” “Yes, but yet my Prince, she may perhaps prevail with him in favor of this St. Florentin, who saved her life at the fire.” “I know nothing of St. Florentin,” replied the Prince, “who is he?” “I am sure,” replied the lady Amphilisia, “I do not know the creature at all.” “Well” replied the Prince, “I think that I may safely promise that I will not give my consent to the lady’s nuptials with any other Cavalier than Prince Vicentio, as he has had mine already that the alliance shall take place; though I must acknowledge that it is too arbitrary.” “The commands of my Prince,” replied the Marchesina di Medicis, “can ever be considered arbitrary.” “Well then, I promise you,”

repeated the Prince. “A thousand thanks,” cried the Lady Amphilisia.

The Prince was happy that he was relieved from the importunities of the Marchesina di Medicis on such a subject ; he had, indeed, no regard whatever for the Prince Vincentio, and was altogether indifferent about his wishes ; the only time when he particularly liked him was in the hours of dissipation and riot—then my dear Vincentio was every thing with him ; but in the moments of tedious reflection, he had a distaste for such friends, yet it was not long before, suffering the fatigue of idleness, he would seek again for the same relief, and chuse again the same company whom he despised.

The Lady Amphilesia now produced some of the most choice and delicate wines, and fruit of the richest flavor ; the fragrant coffee of the Eastern Isles was poured into the richest china cups, and the sweetest perfumes were exhaled from vases to delight the senses of the

Prince, who indulged on the couch of the fair Marchesina, delighted with the leisure and languor which destroyed him, every nerve trembling with excess, and his pulse beating high with the fever of repletion.

The next day the Marchesina di Medicis sent for the Prince Vicentio, who, anticipating his success, flew to her as it were on the wings of the wind, and made himself happy in having secured the royal promise, that would destroy the happiness of another ; he was now certain that Henry St. Florentin must give up all hopes of the hand of the Countess di Simonetta, and he could not believe it possible that she would chuse to pass her days in a convent sooner than espouse a prince.

CHAP. II.

The Rival Benefactors.

HENRY had one evening taken his usual walk, when the poor widow and her children were almost overcome with joy at the approach of their kind benefactor near the door of their cottage, who after having requested in vain that they would subdue their transports, was compelled to insist in the most serious manner that they would not oppress him further with their expressions of gratitude.

When Henry could obtain a moment in which he could be heard, he asked the poor woman if fifty pieces were sufficient to enable her to support and educate her family, without leaving her house or sending them away from her. “Fifty pieces, Sir !!” exclaimed the good creature, “Good Heavens! with half that sum I could set myself up in a little trade, and could be quite happy, and

by care and management should be able to save something for my children, to assist them when they might be able to go into the world and try to get their own bread.

Henry St. Florentin felt happy that the liberality of his unknown benefactor, had enabled him to do more than would have been in his own power, and instantly put the fifty pieces into the widow's lap, and promised to call again in a short time. Henry was taking his leave, when to his astonishment, the Countess di Barlemont, and the Countess di Simonetta, conducted by a servant who had been their guide, entered the cottage.

The Countess di Simonetta who perceived the surprise of Henry, spoke to him in the most friendly manner, and took him by the hand. "You will not wonder," said she, "any longer at this unexpected interview, when you are informed that by some chance we have both fixed on the same object of regard,

and I hope that you will not be jealous, if we contribute something to help this good widow, and if we may be happy enough to preserve her from falling again into the hands of the cruel and hard-hearted men from whom you released her." "Indeed, Madam," replied Henry, "this good lady was relieved in her distress by a more powerful personage."

"Indeed!" replied the Countess and who pray was it that relieved her?"

"It was," replied Henry, "the Stranger Friend." "The Stranger Friend!!"

interrupted the Countess. "It was the same person, Madam," said Henry, "who you noticed yesterday in the Red Mantle, and who accosted you at the door of the carriage." "It is very extraordinary," replied the Lady Juliana.

"Aye, aye, Madam," interrupted the grateful widow, "this Cavalier may say what he pleases, but bless his noble generous heart, he was the first who came to help me, and now he has returned again to-day, and has given me

a sufficient sum to enable me to provide for my children, and to bring them up in honest industry. See Ladies," said she, shewing them the money which Henry had given her.

The Countess di Simonetta was extremely affected at the recital of Henry's noble conduct ; she was unable to conceal her agitation, and turning towards him, said in a sweet and impressive tone of voice : " After the praises which this good woman has bestowed, and to which you are so justly entitled, my approbation can be of little worth ; however, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of expressing to you my admiration of your conduct, which shows such an example of kindness and benevolence, that you must give me the permission to follow you in the noble work of *real* charity.

" Your approbation, Madam," replied Henry, with an animated countenance, " is the most flattering recompense that I could receive, even if my con-

duct really merited such a distinguished notice ; but here I have only been the dispenser of the bounty of another. Henry St. Florentin then detailed, with the noble frankness belonging to his character, the circumstances of the anonymous letter, and also told the Countess in what way he intended to lay out the remainder of the sum which had been sent him in so mysterious a manner, by an unknown hand.

The Countess di Simonetta was still more pleased with the candour, and ingenuous declaration of Henry, by which he refused a portion of praise that he could have taken to himself, without the fear of being detected for an impostor, and she repeated the high sense which she entertained of his honor and liberality.

The Countess di Barlemont, who had just given some gold to the poor woman, to help clothe the children, was taking leave, when the Countess di Simonetta smiling kindly on Henry, asked him to

join their party in a little excursion to La Cassina, and which invitation was not neglected on his part.

The carriages of the Marquis di Simonetta and the Countess Albici, were joined at the road to La Cassina by those of several others of the nobility, who were going to enjoy the beauties of the surrounding scenery of one of the most beautiful spots in Italy, several of the friends of the Countess di Simonetta joined her as they alighted, and one of them having some matters of privacy to communicate to the Countess di Barlemont, led her on one side of the vineyards of La Cassina, and left Henry with the Countess di Simonetta on the other.

There could not be a more delightful picture than that which the surrounding landscape presented. The summer sky was unclouded, the birds were singing on every branch, only a gentle zephyr of air was abroad which scarcely caused the leaves of the olive and the date to

tremble, the ponderous branches of grapes hanging from the luxuriant vines gave a promise, as it were, from Pomona herself, of a rich harvest ; while the corn, with its golden ears, seemed loaded with the food of thousands, and interspersed with the pasturage, displayed nature gladdening by her countenance the heart of man.

Henry, St. Florentin was not unconscious of the beauty of the scene, which seemed calculated for the excitement of the most tender and dangerous impressions. The Countess di Simonetta felt the like sensations, with some embarrassment at being left alone with one who was certainly an object of her esteem and regard ; but concealing her emotion under an air of dignity natural to her, and which insured her a respectful attention, she continued her conversation without restraint, and with an easy gaiety managed to confine it to indifferent subjects ; however, in such cases, every syllable which comes from

the lips of the woman we adore has a deep interest. The skilful lover knows how to turn the conversation to his own advantage, but the lover who is more ingenuous only discovers the state of his own mind, and is contented to rest in cruel uncertainty as to the real sentiments of his mistress ; his heart is so transparent that it may be seen through, and the fascination which he suffers is too powerful for him to have the right use of his sense and judgment.

The Countess di Simonetta, without being either prudish or pedantic, was extremely sensible and refined, and would have startled at any thing like a studied declaration from Henry ; the God of Love, however, manages better, for without a consciousness of their situation, both the Countess and Henry began to touch on the dangerous subject ; the conversation took an animated turn, and although Henry did not say any thing that could explain too much, yet there remained no doubt in the mind

of the Countess, of his sentiments towards her, but unfortunately for his repose, she did not allow him to read distinctly the sentiments of her own mind.

A conversation between two beings of delicacy and sentiment is dangerous to both : sentiment seems to be heightened and increased in proportion to the obstacles and the resistance used to constrain it ; constraints which frequently serve for an excuse for a lover to make his first explanations; but as soon as the contemplation of a rival, and the opinion of indifferent persons or of relations or acquaintances who reason freely and judge severely of the passion, is at an end, it is then no longer circumstances which constrain the avowal, an obstacle yet more powerful arises—it is the beloved object itself, the fear of offending—the fear of saying too much, or, perhaps, of saying too little. The most potent judge is the one to whom we are enslaved, for whom we think we could lose

our lives, before whom we tremble with awe and admiration, and in whose service we glory in captivity.

Such was the situation of Henry St. Florentin, when, in the wood of La Cassina, he found himself separated from the Countess di Barlemont and her friends. At length he ventured to speak: "How much an object of envy should I be, my dear Countess, if I could hope that your approbation of the sentiments which entirely possess my mind at this instant, might be given with the same lovely grace and expression which you bestowed on my conduct towards the poor widow. Pardon this frank avowal, which I cannot resist making at a time so favorable to such sentiments, and, perhaps, the last opportunity that I may have ; I may be allowed saying that I love, since I dare not proceed further, my destiny demands my absence, and this interview may be the last for life." At this expression the Countess felt an interest which occasioned a deep sigh,

when lifting her eyes to Heaven, she left Henry between the contending passions of hope and fear, to join the Countess di Barlemont, who came up at the instant, as it were, to relieve the lovers from their mutual embarrassment, and the conversation once more became general.

During the remainder of the walk, Henry could not snatch another opportunity of speaking privately to the Countess di Simonetta.

On the return of the party to the house of the Countess Albici, that lady entreated Henry to sup with them, and as an inducement, said they should have no company. The Marquis di Simonetta and the Count di Barlemont were gone to Montferrat. Henry accepted the invitation without hesitation, as he hoped, in the course of the evening, to be able to learn his fate from the lips of his beloved Juliana.

The Countess di Barlemont assisted greatly to make the supper party happy,

as usual, by her genuine effusions of wit and fancy. The raillery which she occasionally used, the apparent reveries of the Countess Juliana, and the abstraction of Henry, whose mind was occupied with the most interesting contemplations, would have made the scene entertaining to an indifferent spectator.

It could not be expected that the Countess di Barlemont could sustain the whole discourse to herself, in fact, they soon grew tired of each other, and separated at an earlier hour than usual.

Henry returned to his lodgings, and having reflected on the events of the day, was convinced that the obstacles to his hopes were greater than he had at first imagined, and that the high sense of duty which the Countess professed to owe to the Marquis her father, presented an almost insurmountable barrier to his views, which he begun to think extravagant, and of a nature that could never be brought to accomplishment.

CHAP. III.

The Invitation.—A Benefit ungraciously bestowed.



THE next morning when Henry awoke, a letter was brought him from the Count di Barlemont, who had just arrived, to acquaint him that he had the Marquis di Simonetta's commands to invite him to dine with them that day.

There could not be any thing more grateful to the wishes of Henry than this invitation presented, as it seemed to promise another opportunity of explaining his sentiments to the Countess Juliana, and of knowing hers; he therefore readily accepted the engagement. Henry found, assembled at the Palace of the Count di Barlemont, not only all the company he had been accustomed to meet there, but some more of those who he remembered to have seen at the grand masque, and amongst them the Duke

id Montferand, who smiled very graciously on Henry, as he entered the audience chamber, and gave him his hand; besides expressing himself in the most handsome terms, greatly concerned that they had not met sooner. Henry, on his part, made the most grateful acknowledgments in return; when the conversation was interrupted by the ladies who joined the party.

After the usual compliments had taken place, the Marquis di Simonetta approached with a great deal of gravity towards Henry, and addressing him, particularly, said: "Sir, I must entreat your acceptance of this very poor mark of gratitude, which I have in my power to offer you, for the prompt assistance that you afforded my daughter in a moment of danger; and rest assured, that the Marquis di Simonetta knows how to value even the slightest service done to him or his family." Having said these few words, the Marquis presented Henry with a letter addressed to him,

which he opened, and found to his surprise, that it contained an appointment to the command of a troop in the regiment which he had lately left.

All the company present who were in possession of the secret of the Marquis affected to join immediately in Henry's astonishment, and were loud in their praises of the Marquis di Simonetta's liberality, for having so nobly rewarded the service he had done by gallantly rescuing the Countess Juliana from the flames ; and spoke of the recompense being the most magnificent, and even princely.

Henry St. Florentin was some time before he could recover himself sufficiently to express his sentiments of the obligation ; he was, however, naturally grateful and ingenuous, and, at the same time, unsuspecting. He returned thanks therefore to the Marquis, in the most sincere terms, for a benefit which threatened to prove fatal to his fondest hopes ; to which language the Marquis,

with an unworthy dissimulation, replied: "Count, I request that you will say no more on the subject of this poor recompense for your spirit and gallantry. I hope that I shall soon have it in my power to do more.—This young Cavalier," said he to the Duke di Montferand, "should see some service abroad." The Duke bowed, and the Marquis concluded his harangue by saying: "At present, however, Count Henry, you will be satisfied that I am not ungrateful."

The Countess Juliana enhanced the value of the present of the Marquis greatly, by assuring Henry, with an enchanting smile, that there was not anything that could efface from her recollection the *imminent* danger of that night, and his *eminent* service.

The day passed without any other remarkable occurrence. The Marquis di Simonetta had dedicated it to an ostentatious display of his liberality, and

to give all possible publicity to such an act of munificence, he had taken care to assemble all those who were witnesses of Henry's conduct at the fire. He was anxious to let every one see how well he knew to appreciate a service done him by any individual; and that his munificence would always prompt him to exceed in value that service, whatever it might be.

Thus did the proud Marquis di Sinetta at once flatter his own vanity, and set his mind at rest, even in a moral point of view, as to the amount of the obligation which he had forced on Henry, very far exceeding and overballancing what he had done.

But what was yet more pleasing in the contemplations of the Marquis, was the expedient which he had contrived for getting the Duke de Montferrard to order Henry to join his regiment in eight days at latest, under pretence that the Count St. Florentin himself was ea-

ger to depart, having lost a great deal of time by having remained so long in the capital.

The Marquis was very much satisfied with himself, for having put things in so good a train ; and was persuaded that his stratagem would have the effect of extinguishing the sentiment which he feared had been raised in the breast of his daughter towards her protector, and that Henry, when once he had left Milan, would give himself up entirely to the pursuits of his profession or of pleasure ; for his pride would not suffer him to conceive otherwise than that Henry would feel himself highly honoured, and would be very much gratified at having so powerful a friend as himself. In this respect, however, the Marquis was deceived, because, like too many, he formed an estimate of the passions and opinion of others by his own—a standard as false as can be chosen, since men differ in mind as in form, and have many and various shades of character.

Henry St. Florentin, notwithstanding he used repeated attempts, was unable to renew the conversation with the Countess, which had been so happily begun in the wood.

The Countess di Simonetta endeavoured to prevent any particular conversation with Henry the whole evening, without, however, exhibiting any marks of reserve. When Henry, finding that there would be no chance of his being gratified that evening, politely took his leave, and retired to his lodging.

When Henry reflected on the conduct of the Countess di Simonetta, he trembled for the event, and a cruel incertitude, bordering on despair, took entire possession of his mind; hope, with all its delightful illusions left him, and the thought of his brilliant appointment in the army served to agonize him the more, as it seemed to remove him still further from the chance of ever possessing the object of his love.

The Countess di Simonetta was not,

however, more tranquil. On her return from the wood of La Cassina, she immediately communicated to the Signora Ammirato the sentiments of Henry St. Florentin, but that favorite had always represented, in the most serious and solemn language, the necessity of a blind obedience from a daughter to a father ; and that the Marquis would have reason to disapprove her conduct, if ever she permitted herself to receive the addresses of any Cavalier, whose fortune and rank were below her own , and that a continuation of such a correspondence and acquaintance would prove to her a source of misfortune and calamity, when it was considered that she was surrendering her heart to one who could not, by any circumstance arrive at the honour of her hand, all which reasoning she she applied to the situation of the Countess di Simonetta and Henry St. Florentin.

The Countess di Simonetta loved and respected her worthy companion the Signora Ammirato, who, indeed, since

the death of the Marchesina, had supplied the place of a mother ; and she did not hesitate to re-assure her of what she had many times before given her proof—an implicit attention to her counsel. It was at this time, that she promised to avoid any private conversation with Henry. It was not, therefore, until after her conversation with the Signora Ammirato, that she affected an indifference which, unfortunately for her peace, it was not in her power to entertain ; an indifference which her feelings denied, and her heart disavowed.

CHAP. IV.

The Midnight Councils at the Palace of Trezzo.—The Lady Laurenta di Volturna engages to serve the Prince Vicentio.—L'Isola d'Amori.

THE Prince Vicentio, although a depraved libertine, and satiated with the gallantries of the court of Milan, had still an inordinate appetite for women whose beauty was rendered still more estimable by chastity: it was then that the Prince Vicentio hungered like a wolf to devour. The Lady Juliana, he well knew, could not be obtained by any other means than marriage, and of that event taking place he could have but little hope. He consulted, therefore, with Margotus, the pander of the Prince Charles, as to what was best to be done; and that Cavalier, accomplished in all the arts of intrigue, still advised that it was

by women only that St. Florentin could fall ; and that the mind of the Lady Juliana once relieved from the esteem which it entertained for her lover, would immediately yield to the offer of a Prince.

The ladies most celebrated for their private state intrigues, as well as those of love, were summoned nightly at the palace of Trezzo, to consult with the chamberlain Margotus, and with Gilulphus and Moscadello. Among the principal of the women, were the Lady Laurenta di Volturna, and the Ladies Livia and Clementina.

The meeting was in a retired chamber of the Palace, adorned with all the pictures and furniture best calculated to charm the eye and to raise desire. The statue of the Venus of Medicis, of pure unsullied marble and of exquisite workmanship, appeared on one side of the entrance, and on the other was the Apollo Belvidere. Numerous paintings of nymphs bathing, and of Cupids in various attitudes, decorated the walls ;

and in the angles of the room were egyptian tables, covered with the choicest fruits, pastry and wines.

It was in this secret chamber of the palace that the conclave met, for love and mischief; and within its circumference, were hatched the most dangerous plots, fatal to the innocence and happiness of many.

The ladies received the Prince Vicentio as the most favoured cavalier next to the Prince Charles. It is true that the Lady Joanela di Brenta had always shuddered at the abandoned principles of the wretch Vicentio, but they had taken care to leave her out of the intended plan, and the other ladies were too depraved to entertain any scruples.

The Prince Vicentio and Margotus, demanded first of the Lady Livia di Modena, whether she thought she could fix the attention of St. Florentin by her fascinations, and draw him from his constancy to the Countess di Simonetta; paying her at the same time many com-

pliments on the attractions which she possessed. The lady, however, declined the office; she was naturally good-natured, and felt a respect for the virtue of women, but the plain truth was, that the whole of her time was occupied in attempting the seduction of a rich Marquis from France, and at the same time to rob him of his fortune at play.

The Lady Clementina di Campanda was the next to whom the Prince Vicentio explained his project, and she was engaged to use all her arts. The Lady Clementina, in truth, hated all men, and considered them as monsters watching to destroy ; she rejoiced, therefore, at the opportunity of a great revenge, and concealed her animosity under the mask of a sensibility which was once real, but which now served her for fatal purposes.

The great master of intrigue, Margotus, did not care to trust alone to the powers of the Lady Clementina ; the most brilliant offers were, therefore, made

also to the Lady Laurenta di Volturna, who actually entertained a passion for the mind and person of St. Florentin, ever since she had seen him at the Lady Victoria's house. The Lady Laurenta, therefore, was most to be depended on; and it might be already seen in the fine expression of her face, that she was determined on conquest.

The means which were to be used by the ladies, were left to their own invention and intrigue. The lady Laurenta appeared to have her plan already in her head; and the midnight council, after partaking of the exquisite wines and refreshments which had been provided, broke up, bent on immediate action and success.

Fortune, however, appeared to favor the designs of the Lady Laurenta. It happened that that lady had a beautiful palace, on the same road which Henry St. Florentin used to frequent, for the purpose of visiting the poor widow who had been the object of his care. It was

situated on the borders of the canal of La Rosa, and in the midst of a small forest.

Henry St. Florentin had been, one day, to pay his charitable visit, when he was attracted from the cottage of the poor widow, by the fineness of the evening, to take a walk on the borders of a pleasant wood, which appeared about a mile distant. Henry had no sooner arrived at the spot, than he was tempted to enter a shady grove, and to explore an irregular path, almost concealed with shrubbery, where a little door presented itself, almost hid by the trees. The delighted St. Florentin, finding it half open, ventured to satisfy his curiosity, and was charmed with the view of an earthly paradise. His attention was arrested by innumerable new and beautiful objects; and his senses were delighted with the varied odours of the orange, the myrtle and the province rose, which were mingled together, and borne on the susceptible zephyrs that collected

them. A fountain of the clearest water kept playing at the entrance ; and innumerable cascades were seen between the trees, giving the most charming coolness to the scenery. The various basins were filled with gold and silver fish, playing wantonly near the surface of the gently ruffled water; while the murmurings of rivulets were sweetly echoed by the adjoining caves and grottos.

The paroquet, the lowry, the java sparrow and the virginia nightingale, with numerous other foreign birds, displayed their plumage in aviaries betwixt the foliage; while the garden presented every curious exotic that was suited to the delightful climate of Italy.

“ Shall I,” said the Count St. Florentin, “ enter this charming place ?” He stood hesitating for a few moments ; at length, his curiosity prevailed, and he proceeded, when he observed various statues between the trees, of exquisite workmanship. Cupids advantageously placed behind the foliage, some in at-

titudes of drawing their bows, and others spreading nets for the unwary passengers. Nymphs amusing themselves bathing in the clean stream of the basins, and the statues of Diana and of Venus in the recesses of the wood, with innumerable inscriptions annexed, all descriptive of the tender passion.

The young Count St. Florentin felt more and more enchanted, but was presently prevented proceeding further by a branch of the canal La Rosa, which seemed to extend itself a great way. By turning, however, a little to the left, Henry discovered a drawbridge, over which he passed between pedestals of the finest marble, on each of which was placed a naked nymph, who held a wreath of flowers and a bandeau, on which was written

“ *L' Isola d' Amori !* ”

The imagination of the young Count St. Florentin became more and more enchanted and confused ; a new kind of

sensation, dangerous enough in itself, found its way to his breast : it was the effect of the excess, of the sweetness of the air, and of voluptuous repose, that overpowered him. He stood an instant motionless, reading the inscription. If Henry had given himself the chance of a moment's reflection, he might easily have conjectured that the place must belong to some lady, or else to some noble who gratified his taste at the expence of propriety. St. Florentin, however, was too delighted to return from the enchanted ground, and proceeded to a Mosque, on the door of which was inscribed the words

“ Sacred to Love ! ”

Henry St. Florentin entered, and passed through an apartment to a beautiful saloon, hung round with pictures, all descriptive of the passion. A bust of Sappho was placed facing the entrance. The alcoves were filled with vases, dispensing abroad the most agreeable perfumes. An

elegantly adorned library appeared in niches between, and a rich carpeting covered the floor of the chamber.

A door of the most beautiful variegated woods, was at the farther end of the saloon, and which was shut. Henry, for an instant, hesitated whether he should proceed further on ground which was consecrated to love ; but the novelty of his surprise engaged him to continue his enquiries, and on touching the door which had attracted his attention, he found that was not locked within, but seemed to invite his entrance, and yielded to a gentle touch.

Every thing was still, save the music of the birds, and the delighted St. Florentin entered into an apartment which contained a basin of clear water, and a sofa of green satin, on which lay before his enraptured vision, a beautiful female, entirely undrest, excepting a loose thin robe partly covering her beautiful limbs : she was sleeping, and a book elegantly bound lay at her side.

Henry scarcely knew how he should act; a breath would have disturbed her, and hence he stood like a statue, over the beautiful object of his admiration.

Faithful as was Henry St. Florentin to the Lady Juliana, such a rich display of the charms of women before him, could not fail to kindle the most dangerous passion. Her bosom was uncovered—Henry had feasted his eyes on the picture before him, enamoured and enchanted. “Heavens!” cried he to himself, “Surely, this is no mortal residence, nor is this fair creature mortal. I am certainly enchanted in the realms of Arabian magic.” At this instant, Henry observed a lute resting against the sofa, which he took immediately in his hand, and being a master of the instrument, touched it so as to produce the most soft, sweet and ravishing sounds. The sleeping lady awoke, astonished, and fixed her eyes on St. Florentin with an expression of anger, mixed with

amazement. “ And who is it pray,” cried she, “ who has presumed to enter into a place sacred to the retirement of the Lady Laurenta di Volturna ?” Henry bowed, fell on his knees at the side of the sofa, and in the most respectful manner entreated forgiveness. “ I have been, indeed,” said he “ too presumptuous, for I did not know the divinity that slept within this temple ; but the intruder is severely punished, he burns with an inextinguishable fire. You see, Madam, at your feet, one who has never before felt the magic of such charms.” “ If I am right,” replied the Lady, appeased, “ I think you are the Count St. Florentin ; and you may be proud when I tell you that there is no other cavalier in Italy, who should have escaped my resentment for such an intrusion. However, this retreat I have named *L’Isola d’Amori* and you, are one of the favorites of the Deity. But tell me, by what chance did you get into this gar-

den ?” Henry explained, and it appeared that the small private gate had been left open by the carelessness of a servant.

It may be easy to conceive what pride, what delight, what exultation was felt by the Lady Laurenta di Volturna, at the accident which placed her victim immediately in her power. She now desired him to sit next her on the sofa, and her face wore a smile of complacency and love. Henry St. Florentin had taken her hand, the thrilling pleasure had spread its sweet poison through every vein. The subtle flame increased—its influence had already reached his heart, and his understanding began to yield, when the artful Laurenta bending towards him in the act of listening, admitted new beauties to be seen, while every attitude seemed to convey those rapturous ideas which are dangerous even to the best regulated mind.

The Lady Laurenta now arose. “Come,” said she, “St. Florentin, will you trust yourself with me, you need

some refreshment after your *voyage of discovery*."

The natural ease and gracefulness with which the Count St. Florentin led the beautiful Laurenta from the bath, made him appear to her to the greatest advantage. His figure was grand, and his manner prepossessing and engaging. It was impossible that so warm a heart as Laurenta di Volturna's should not feel admiration and pleasure.

"Within this place," cried the Lady Laurenta, (approaching a grotto, the outside of which was spread over by a rich vine) we may refresh ourselves.

A repast the most luxurious that can possibly be imagined, consisting of pines, melons, peaches, nectarines, the mantuan grapes, and the richest wines, was spread ready on tables of ivory, supported by golden fauns and satyrs. During the entertainment, the lady was attended by several black slaves. "This is the way," cried the Lady Laurenta, "that Europeans live in India, where I

have passed some of the happiest days of my life.

After a delightful hour in the company of one of the most fascinating women in the world, Henry St. Florentin rose to take his leave; when Laurenta, with the lute in her hand, played a delightful Italian air, expressive of her sighs of absence and the transport of a return. Henry was in extacy at the performance, and was completely enslaved in the most dangerous of all the passions.

When Henry returned home he retired to his closet, and revolved over in his mind all the pleasing incidents of the day. The Lady di Simonetta was entirely forgotten. The only image present to his imagination was Laurenta di Volturna; and at night sleep did not attend his pillow. It was near morning before even slumber arrived, and then it was only to represent to his disturbed repose, the voluptuous dreams of *l'Isola d'Amori*.

CHAP. V.

The death of the Lady Agniolla.—The stratagems of the Count Montorio.

HENRY was interrupted one evening in his reflections on the Countess di Simonetta's worth, and the Lady Laurenta's beauty, by the arrival of a messenger with a letter from his old tutor St. Roch, who had been some time at the palace of Apulia, by the desire of the Lady Agniolla, who lay dangerously ill, and intimated a wish to see Henry; but added the good St. Roch, in his letter, I entreat you, by the love which you owe the Countess, not to defer your journey an hour, as I am apprehensive that some injustice is designed both to your interests and to her intentions. The Count Montorio and his son, the artful Montaltus, are both at the forest, and are studying mischief; I will take

care to watch your interests in case any thing happens, and entreat that you may visit the forest with the greatest dispatch.

Henry was exceedingly afflicted at the intelligence which he received, as it was impossible for him to comply with the wishes of the old St. Roch, without obtaining leave from the Duke de Montferrand.

Although the Countess di St. Florentin had of late only shewn a cold regard for Henry, yet he loved her affectionately, and was very anxious to be with her in her sickness, for which purpose he wrote immediately to the Duke, soliciting a few days leave on such an occasion.

During this interim the Count Montorio was busily engaged in plots against Henry's fortune and happiness; he had fancied to himself complete success in his attempts to traduce and vilify him in his absence, and hoped that he might be ruined in the opinion of every cava-

lier in the regiment, and never be able to return : Montorio concluded, therefore, that Henry's prospects were at an end, and began to consider only how he might profit by the circumstance of his being at Milan, and of the illness of his mother, to deprive him of his property in case of her death.

The Count Montorio had returned to the castle with these views, but under pretence of the most anxious solicitude for the health of the Countess : that great master in dissimulation concealed his black designs with the most accomplished art, and saw his Lady gradually decline before his eyes, with an impatience which it would have been difficult for any other to have given the appearance of anxiety for her recovery. The event of her death was the first object of his thoughts, and the most flattering to his avarice.

The Count Montorio attended to every stage of his lady's disorder, and watched her day and night with an as-

siduity that did not fail of passing for a proof of tenderness and regard. If he absented himself for any time from her chamber, it was for the sole purpose of preparing a will, which he hoped he should be able to get her to sign.

The Count was one morning engaged in his devotions to his stratagem, when the servant brought him two letters: one from a friend, an officer, which apprized him of the advancement of Henry to the command of a troop. Montorio was furious at this intelligence, and was only drawn from the contemplation of a deep-laid scheme on the life of Henry, by the arrival of one of the attendants on the Countess, who represented her as being in the last moments of her existence.

The Count Montorio run to the apartment of his lady, with the utmost precipitation, and went to the side of her bed, where she was laying with her eyes lifted up to Heaven. At the entrance of the Count, she faintly articu-

lated "Remember my poor neglected Henry:" the Count Montorio, however, alive only to his own selfish view hastened immediately to his closet for the will which he had so carefully prepared, and returned almost in an instant with it in his hand; but death, still more active, had defeated his views and called the Countess away, far from the reach of his power and controul.

The Count Montorio was mute and in despair, as he saw his lady pale and breathless on the bed; he remained some moments absorbed in the most profound meditation: his mind, which had been for a long time inaccessible and impervious to every thing like feeling, now suffered, and was torn. He was overwhelmed at the idea of the loss of wealth, which he would sustain by the death of the Countess, for the whole of the estates in Italy of the deceased Count St. Florentin, with the fortune of the Countess, devolved on Henry.

Another severe mortification to the Count Montorio was the event of Henry having been advanced to a command, while his own son was only a lieutenant in the same regiment. These reflections created that unceasing torment in mind of the Count, which is the ever-failing companion of those who resort to injustice and fraud for the accomplishment of their desires. The fortune which he was on the point of grasping, by the will he had prepared, would be enjoyed by another, and after all his pains to do wrong, a powerful providence had interfered to prevent him.

Nevertheless the Count Montorio under his severe disappointment, was not without new wiles and artifices, how to retain, at least, some part of Henry's property : he knew the sensibility and generosity of mind of the young St. Florentin, and, above all, the affectionate regard which he had always manifested towards his mother ; he knew that filial

piety reigned in the breast of the noble and generous Henry St. Florentin, and that the last wishes of the deceased would be to him an absolute command. It was on these grounds that the Count Montorio established, in his mind, a new plan. Without losing an instant, he wrote to Henry an account of the death of his mother, and described to him, with a well feigned sorrow, the loss which they had suffered: he added that the Countess had not actually made a will agreeable to the customary forms, but that she made a declaration of her sentiments, which had been put into writing, that he had taken great care of it, and that he would shew it him immediately on his arrival, he concluded his dispatch by congratulating Henry on his advancement, and by telling him that he hoped, in future, they would be the best of friends, as they were mutual sufferers by the death of so valuable and excellent a woman.

Henry received the dispatch contain-

ing the news of the death of the Countess Agniolla, just as he was departing from Milan, having obtained permission from the Duke de Montferrand, who was a kind and benevolent officer, though very strict in all the duties of his profession.

The Count Montorio, after having sent his dispatch, occupied himself in writing a paper or declaration, which it was his design to pretend was written as it had been dictated by the Lady Agniolla: it begun by charging Henry the Florentin to consider the Count Montorio as his father, to make him his friend and adviser, and to allow him a pension out of the estates sufficient to sustain his dignity and rank: the paper concluded with an injunction, in the most solemn terms, to perform her wishes in every particular, and to allow a very handsome yearly sum to the infamous Montaltus.

When the writing was prepared the Count Montorio locked it up carefully

in a small casket, to which he affixed the seal of the Countess, and preserved it as a document from which he hoped to derive considerable advantage.

The Count Montorio, the better to perform his part in the deep-laid plan, which was to rob Henry of his fortune, made all the parade that was possible, by affixing seals to the effects belonging to the Countess, that not any thing, as he said, might be touched before the arrival of the Count St. Florentin, and to make deception still more plausible, those seals had the armorial bearings and motto of that Count.

Henry arrived at the forest of Apulia, plunged in the deepest melancholy, which was heightened by the reflection that he was absent when the Countess had the most ardent desire to see him, before she closed her eyes for ever.

The Countess was buried in the Abbey of St. Bene di Polino, with the greatest funeral pomp and ceremony, and after a show of respect for Henry's feelings,

the Count solemnly prepared to open the casket, containing the declaration, which had been so ingeniously fabricated. Montallus, who had been sent for to assist in the plans of Montorio, was present on the occasion. Henry received the sealed packet with the most profound respect, and before he had read it, assured Montorio that whatever it might contain, every wish of his mother should be fulfilled, nor did Henry entertain the slightest suspicion that the Count Montorio could be so diabolical as to fabricate the paper writing: he had the highest and most religious veneration and respect for the commands of the deceased, and which determined his conduct.

The Count Montorio, however, alive to the apprehensions of a guilty breast, feared that, in a moment of reflection, something might arise in the mind of Henry that might defeat his purpose, he proposed, therefore, immediately to send for a notary, that they might set-

tle, without delay, every affair of moment, that they might the sooner retire to indulge and participate in their mutual regret, and that after the act of affirming the declaration should be performed, they would consult together respecting a monument to be raised to the memory of the amiable and excellent Lady Agnionla. Henry consented to every thing, and presently the notary, who had been sent for, arrived, and entered on the business in due form.

While, however, Montorio was engaged in an artful and pretended perusal of the instrument by which Henry was to confirm the validity of the declaration, the notary gave into the hand of St. Florentin a paper which appeared to be another duplicate of the protocol for his perusal, but which he found to his astonishment, to contain only the words—

“ *Refuse to sign the paper writing,*

“ *Yours,*

“ *The Stranger Friend.*”

Henry, for an instant, felt a power as it were impelling him from the fatal mischief, and he was just about summoning resolution enough to dismiss the notary, without executing the proposed instrument, when Montorio snatched the affirmation from the notary's hand, and with an air of frankness told Henry that he should not sign it, that although it was the wish of the Countess, yet it was too great a sacrifice for him to make, that he was young, and that his fortune would not be more than necessary to support his rank, besides remarking that he had a heart disposed to do much good with wealth.

The apparent reluctance of the Count Montorio to complete the business, had all the effect that he could have desired. Henry was affected by the nobleness of his conduct on the occasion, and replied "Count Montorio, I owe much to you for your kind condolence, and the attention which you shewed to the Countess during her illness; you will be my

adviser and friend : notary give me the paper : with these words Henry was about to put his seal, when he recollected the caution which he had received, and which he had kept in his own bosom, he was certain that it had come from a friend, and he took advantage of the liberal display the Count Montorio had made of his disinterestedness, to accede to his wishes for the present, and dismissed the notary, to give time for reflection. Montorio affected to be very much pleased with the termination of the affair, and Montaltus approved also of the business being postponed.

Montorio, during the conversation with Henry, and the reading of the affirmation by the notary, had suffered a torture of suspense and agony, he would have triumphed in the success of his stratagem ; but was ready to sink into the earth when he saw the change in Henry's countenance, on the perusal of the paper put into his hand by the notary, and which he considered to be

the duplicate of the one he held, as for the change which he observed, that was mistaken by him, for a lurking suspicion in the mind of Henry, and which he fancied he had no sooner discovered, than he wished to anticipate any objection, by a display of his own liberality, but this determination was not made without a curse on Henry for his suspicions, and a secret promise that he would be revenged. Henry, whose mind was truly noble, was not satisfied with himself, for disobeying, in the slightest degree, the wishes of the Countess: yet there was something so mysterious in the caution which he had received that he knew not how to act, and, perhaps concluded on the very worst measure that could be pursued: he desired the notary to prepare, a protocol of a solemn deed, whereby, in case of his dying, without a child, he disposed of the whole of his property to be divided between Montorio and Montaltus. "I have," said he, "neither

relation nor friend besides yourselves ; it is not probable that I shall ever marry, and you, as the persons I most esteem, are best entitled to all that I have. The Count Montorio, whose resentment was pacified by this declaration, could scarcely conceal his satisfaction, but affected very gravely to remonstrate with Henry on his dejection, which, he said, was highly blameable and must be surmounted. “ Come St. Florentin,” said he, “ a soldier must not yield to depression of spirit ; if you insist on signing the instrument you propose, it shall be, Sir, but may you live long to enjoy the fortune to which you have succeeded.” Montorio, whose mind was capacious, looked forward already to the possibility of Henry’s death, and to contemplations connected with that event too fatal and decisive.

The wretch, Montorio, triumphed, therefore, in the partial success of his plan ; but though virtue frequently suffers for a time, by the deep-laid scheme,

of the wicked, yet that time is seldom of any duration ; the moment will come in which it must receive the punishment due to the labour of malice, and the mask which, sooner or later, must fall off, discovers the complete deformity of the monster, who, no longer daring to expose his hideous head to the light, retires into darkness and despair: that moment, however, had not arrived to the Count Montorio, and he was yet to prosper in mischief.

Henry now made the Count acquainted with the order which he had received to go to his regiment immediately, and that he should set out in two days. The Count proposed that his son Montaltus should accompany him on his journey, and that they should return with St. Florentin to Milan, to make the necessary preparations. Henry accepted their offer with his usual frankness, and left a place only dear to him when it contained his parent—the Lady Agniolla.

Montorio was now satisfied on two important points. Henry had signed the deed which gave his estates, after his death, to the Count and Montaltus, and during the absence of Henry, the Count was to have the entire management of his fortune: there was, however, one circumstance which lay heavy at his heart, and which destroyed all the pleasure he received from the success of his artifice; he longed to attain the knowledge how Henry had so much gained the friendship of the Duke de Montferrand, as to obtain an appointment from him, only given to the first nobles of Italy: for Henry, who was not in the habit of speaking of himself, had said nothing of the event which led to his acquaintance with the Marquis di Simonetta: the Count Montorio could not, therefore, reconcile Henry's advancement, and that too notwithstanding the reports which had been so industriously circulated to his disadvantage, he had wished the appoint-

ment for his son, Montaltus, but he was unable to obtain, even with all the interest that he could make with the Prince Charles.

Montorio's business, therefore, at Milan was to see the Duke de Montferrand and to draw the secret from him.

The next day the Count Montorio, Montaltus and Henry set out for Milan, and arrived thither in the afternoon, when Henry parted from them to make the necessary preparation for his departure for Novarra.

The next morning the Count Montorio paid his visit to the Duke de Montferrand, and was received by him with all the curtesey of an Italian noble, but with no particular marks of regard, as the Duke did not like the character of Montorio ; he managed, however, to draw the secret from him of the affair which led to Henry's advancement ; and had the mortification of hearing the Duke lavish praises on

the gallant conduct of Henry St. Florentin.

Montorio, although burning with envy and hatred, was compelled to approve all that was said of Henry by the Duke, lest he should betray the animosity he actually bore towards him, but every word that he heard uttered in his commendation, was a sting which excited his malice and revenge still more against a man who he considered as the bane of his happiness, and the possessor of a fortune which would have become his sons, if Henry had died before the Countess Agniolla.

After taking leave of the Duke, the Count formed a fresh scheme, and to facilitate its execution, he offered to the artless and generous St. Florentin the most powerful allurements of any, that of presenting himself to him as a faithful and attached friend, an allurements too readily embraced by a susceptible mind; he pretended to have the most tender and affectionate paternal regard

for him, and he took an interest in every thing which respected his welfare. Unfortunately these artifices succeeded but too well ; Henry, deceived by the appearance of friendship which Montorio displayed, readily forgot the former conduct of the Count towards him, and believed that he had a noble mind, which had been misled by the entertainment of wrong impressions.

Henry, who was himself pure and unspotted from any suspicions or ungenerous mistrust, had the common fault of placing too much reliance on the honesty of human nature ; such is the weakness, if it may be so called, of a virtuous and unexperienced mind, open and communicative on every subject, except one, the secret of his passion for the Countess di Simonetta. Henry spoke with the utmost freedom and candour, and especially as to the hopes which the Marquis had led him so entertain of further advancement, through his interest at the Court of Milan.

It will be seen what use the Count Montorio made of the confidence which he had so basely acquired, for he had now so completely drawn Henry into his toils, that it was next to impossible for him to escape, in addition to which the Count was informed, though not exactly as it happened, with the triumph of Lady Laurenta di Volturna.

CHAP. VI.

Henry prepares to leave Milan.—Suffers a severe disappointment.

HENRY, having made all the necessary preparations for his departure, went for the first time since the death of his mother, to the Countess di Barlemont's, to take leave of the family.

The Marquis di Simonetta, who was afraid that such an interview might be full of consequence to his daughter's repose, entertained considerable anxiety on the subject ; and it was only the consideration that it would be a final meeting that reconciled him to its taking place ; he did not, therefore, suffer the Lady Juliana to be an instant, scarcely, out of his sight, and was closeted with her when the Count St. Florentin was announced.

Henry's demeanour was full of dejec-

tion and melancholy; habited in deep mourning, while his pale countenance, depicted an inconsolable sorrow and rooted care. Indeed, those feelings were so sensibly expressed, that the Countess di Simonetta uttered an involuntary shriek as he entered the room, while the Marquis himself showed signs of astonishment, and earnestly enquired what loss he had sustained. Henry briefly acquainted them with the death of the Countess Agniolla, and added with a sigh, that he had to join his regiment the next day.

The Marquis, notwithstanding the elegance of his manner and his attention to Henry, was scarcely able to conceal the pleasure which he felt at learning that Henry's departure was to be so sudden; and was much distressed how he could contrive to make his visit a short one, which the customary forms made a very difficult affair to accomplish. The Marquis, however, with consummate skill, took care to prevent any serious

conversation between Henry and the Lady Juliana, he paid the strictest attention to every look, and engrossed the whole of Henry's conversation to himself, which effectually answered the purpose intended, as Henry could not, during the whole time of the visit, find a single opportunity of speaking to the Countess di Simonetta, except on the most general heads of conversation.

The Count St. Florentin continued his visit almost two hours, without being able to accomplish the ardent wish of his heart, or of saying one private adieu to his beloved Juliana; and thinking then, that he had prolonged his visit beyond what the rules of politeness allowed, took his leave, thanking the Marquis for his kindness and friendship, who, on his part, affected a total ignorance of any other cause for his emotions than that of his being overcome with a grateful sense of the benefit which he had received. Henry desired the Countess to express his respects and duty

the Countess di Barlemont, and then took his leave with an almost broken heart.

The Marquis di Simonetta, without appearing to be at all sensible of the inquietude of his daughter, immediately proposed an airing in the coach, and without waiting a reply, ordered it to the door; when he directed the servants to drive to one of the first jewellers in Milan, where he bought, for an enormous sum, a set of the most valuable diamonds, which he presented immediately to the Countess, in hopes that the splendour of the present, might obliterate from her recollection the object which he most dreaded, and create in place of it, a love for magnificence and parade. But it is not easy to impose on the heart in such cases: the Countess, it is true, examined the diamonds with admiration, but they only produced a comparison in her mind between them and one inestimable jewel which she could not attain, happiness.

Henry returned home in a much more

melancholy mood than that in which he had set out in the morning ; all hopes of seeing his beloved Countess were now at an end, and he was left in a cruel incertitude whether he had or had not made an impression on her heart. Nor was there any thing, perhaps, more distressing than the doubt which Henry entertained of the regard of his beloved Juliana ; he reproached himself a thousand times for his timidity, and was almost tempted to seek a pretence for delaying his departure, but the fear of displeasing the Duke de Montferrand and of offending the Marquis of whom he had taken a final leave, the improbability which there would be of his even seeing the Countess again, if her father suspected the motive which had prompted him to disobey the orders that he had received to join his regiment, altogether dissuaded a noble and generous mind from such a pretext for delay, and urged him to submit to the severity of his destiny.

The Count St. Florentin, after a severe struggle, gained the victory over his passions, and gave orders to his people to have 'every thing ready for his journey the next morning, it having been settled that he and Montaltus should travel together ; it is true that he did not like the company of that cavalier, but he considered him a friend and relation, and his manners, in Henry's opinion, rather indicated a blunt and honest disposition than a bad heart.

CHAP. VII.

The Journey.—The Stranger Friend.

Henry having some time to spare before the carriages could be got ready, feeling considerable dejection of mind, was determined on indulging it by retreating to some sequestered walk, where he might indulge in contemplation, but at that instant he happened to recollect the poor widow, and that he had not seen her for some days.

The children who were at the door of the widow's cottage gave a shout for joy as he approached, and clustered round him, while the good mother, in language the most tender and affectionate enquired anxiously of the cause of the alteration which she saw in his person and countenance. Henry, with his usual kindness, thanked her for the interest which she appeared to take in his happi-

The honest Nicholas, who had arrived at the age of twenty-one, had all the charity and benevolence of his mother, with a spirit and hardihood, nevertheless, which made it well that he happened to be absent at the time of the misfortune which befell her, or he would have treated her oppressors but roughly, and would have rescued her from their hands, even at the hazard of his life.

Scarcely had the poor widow uttered the name of her deliverer, before the honest Nicholas fell at Henry's feet, and offered a prayer to Heaven to bless and preserve him. "Bless our deliverer," said he, "the deliverer of my mother." "Ah, sir," continued he to Henry, "we owe every thing to you; you have saved the best of parents from the horrors of a dungeon! you have saved my infant brother from perishing for want; but I have one favor still to ask—ah, sir, you must, indeed, add one kindness to those you

have already shewn us." "I dare say," replied Henry, "you will not ask any thing but what I shall be willing to grant, if it may be in my power." "Ah, sir," replied Nicholas, "it is then to take me into your service, let me be your servant, sir; I am strong and active, and your kindness and generosity to us, at a moment of great distress, will command my gratitude; for who could be ungrateful to such a master?—Ah, sir, do not deny me this, do not deny me this."

Henry raised up young Nicholas, with considerable emotion, and thanked him for the frank and noble manner in which he had offered to attach himself to his service. "But," said he, "honest Nicholas, it would be an irreparable loss to your poor mother if I was to take you from her, and I am on the point of going a journey, even this very day; nay, within an hour." "Indeed, sir," cried Nicholas, "my mother wishes it to be so, and, for myself, I shall never

be happy with any body else ; and for travelling, I like it of all things, so do not deny me my request, I shall break my heart if you do."

The good old woman now joined in the entreaties of her son, the honest Nicholas, and at length Henry determined to take him into his service, and gave him permission to follow him home as soon as he could get himself ready.

Henry now took leave of the widow, and left her the money which he had designed for her use, being the only condition which he would agree to take her son into his employ.

Henry, on his arrival, found the carriage waiting; and any one, of a more suspicious mind than himself, might have easily discovered, from the malicious smile of Montaltus, at his approach, that he had entertained hopes that Henry could not summon resolution to go, and that he would disgrace himself by disobeying the orders of his general to join the regiment. Montal-

tus took care, however, to receive him, with great affectation of courtesey; when every thing being ready they set out on their journey, followed by Nicholas, who rode one of the horses of the Count St. Florentin.

The travellers had not proceeded far before they were overtaken by a man, mounted on a fleet horse, who rode up to the window of the coach, when he put a small sealed packet into Henry's hand; it was sealed with three seals, and directed to the Count St. Florentin, and written on the outside "*Read the contents when alone!*" The stranger, the instant that he had delivered the packet, rode away, leaving Henry in surprise as to the adventure: fortunately the circumstance had made but a slight impression on the mind of Montaltus, as he took it to be one of the Count Henry's people, who had rode after the carriage with a parcel, which had been left behind by accident.

Henry was presently absorbed in thought, and waited impatiently for his arrival at an inn, where he might snatch an opportunity of opening the mysterious packet, and which opportunity very soon occurred by the accident of one of the wheels breaking, and which required immediate reparation.

The Count St. Florentin, on their arrival at an inn, retired to a private room for a few minutes for the purpose of opening the packet, which contained only the following words: “ *Bear ills with patience, and thy reward shall be the hand of Juliana di Simonetta—
From the Stranger Friend.* ”

CHAP. VIII.

The Castle of Ripalta.

THE Castle of Ripalta, whither the Count St. Florentin was ordered, was situated about fifty leagues to the West, in the Milanese territory, and was erected on the summit of a huge rock, which partly hung over a lake, whose immense waters spread for miles beneath; it had been a fortress of considerable strength, and was still used to preserve the boundaries of the states of Italy. The romantic situation of Ripalta was favorable to Henry St. Florentin's love of retirement, and the leisure which the duty of the fortress was likely to afford, was still more flattering.

Ripalta had been famed in history for the warlike achievements of several of the ancient Italian Nobles, and its

walls and buttresses had long withstood the tempest of the wars, and of time, while its battlements still contained the same engines of destruction that had been used for centuries.

During the journey, Henry could not help reflecting on the adventure which had occurred, and on the contents of the mysterious packet ; he could not conceive how it was possible that a stranger should take such an interest in his happiness, much more how he could have the power to perform his promise ; or how a stranger could know that the Countess di Simonetta entertained a sentiment for him beyond esteem, much more how he could dispose of her hand ; all was wrapt up in mystery, yet the adventure of the packet had the effect of greatly removing the gloom which had hung over the mind of Henry, and he began, at length, to make some reply to the common-place observations of Montaltus, on the fineness of the weather, the richness of the country,

and on the different objects in the roads through which they passed.

The next day the travellers arrived at the Castle of Ripalta, and Henry, who had a noble mind, banished from his thoughts the image of his beloved mistress, that he might pay the strictest attention to his duty, and which was the more necessary as he had heard, on his arrival, that the place was likely to be besieged by the French. Henry St. Florentin felt ardour and enterprise animate his bosom as he approached the fortress.

A scene of a different description to warfare, however, soon engaged Henry's attention. News was received that the French had retired, having been defeated in a dreadful action, and at all events that they could not be prepared to re-commence hostilities before the next spring. The Castle was, therefore, become the seat of gaiety and pleasure; Henry found that he would soon have enough to do to return the

numerous visits which he received hourly, nor could he very well seclude himself from the cavaliers who were very much pleased with their new comrade.

These engagements, however, kept the Count Henry in a constant state of activity, and served to amuse his mind, in a great measure, from the contemplation of an object, which, though further from, was yet nearer to his heart. At every moment of leisure, indeed, the lovely Juliana di Simonetta was present, and since the opening of the mysterious packet, Henry began to paint the future, in less gloomy colours; hope, generous and bountiful hope, the flatterer who all men love and listen to, began to promise, from her immense stores, a succession of successes, extending to the completion of the most ardent of his desires. That sweet enchantress presented him all her illusions by turns, and, as a happy sequel, the possession of the object of his love.

Several months passed away at the

Castle of Ripalta, during which Henry paid the strictest attention to his military duties, when the arrival of the governor, the Count Molina, and his family, gave birth to some events dangerous to the peace of mind of St. Florentin, and which the wicked Montaltus, who the Count Montorio had instructed, did not fail to turn to his advantage.

The Count di Molina brought with him, to the Castle, the Countess di Molina and her daughter, the Lady Madelina.

The Countess di Molina was tall and of handsome figure, expressively proud and full of the love of parade; her mind was destitute of every superior sentiment of virtue, and her understanding insignificant; she was a slave to form and ceremony, and her whole time was taken up in the elaborate study of arranging the visits of the day and night.

The young Lady Madelina di Mo-

lina was highly accomplished in music and dancing, and was, besides, witty and satirical ; her mind was not at all in agreement with her beautiful figure and face ; her education had been neglected in *every thing* that could improve the heart, to bestow on her *every thing* that could adorn and decorate her person, and display her talents to advantage. Thus her disposition had become vain, selfish and arrogant, and she acted the tyrant, on every occasion, over real, and humble worth and excellence.

All the Cavaliers, as is customary, paid their respects to the new chief on his arrival, and the Count St. Florentin, among the rest, who soon became a favorite ; for, without any thing like design or servility, Henry was a proficient in obtaining the esteem of those to whom he was introduced ; he very soon, therefore, acquired the distinguished notice of the Count di Molina, who gave him a general invitation to

the castle, and desired him, when not on duty elsewhere, to consider his house as his own.

The Lady Madelina di Molina could not see Henry, who was one of the handsomest cavaliers of Italy, without feeling a very strong desire to attach him to her train of admirers. Imperious and full of coquetry, the beautiful and accomplished Madelina believed that all men were born to be her slaves, but what had increased her vanity was, that she had never yet met with a being who was not proud of wearing her chains, and who had not gloried in a captive's name.

The Lady Madelina, however, had seen too much of the world not to perceive, after a very little time, that Henry St. Florentin was very superior to most young men of his age, and she was perfectly sensible that to entangle him in her toils, must be by the adoption of other methods than those usual-

ly put in practice by her, to secure her conquests, and reduce to bondage.

It was not long, however, before the vanity of the proud Madelina came to her assistance, she felt highly offended with Henry that he was yet insensible to her charms, and determined by some means or other to fascinate him by the enchantment of which she was so compleat a mistress, flattering herself that she should be able to lead him on until the time that she might use him with tyranny, and leave him an object of contempt and derision.

The Lady Madelina was, however, much mistaken in Henry, he was neither volatile nor inconstant, and his love for the Countess di Simonetta had taken too deep an impression to be effaced by the allurements of a woman, who pretended to his alliance. It was different with the Lady Laurenta, who had not any such view. The Lady Madelina was likely, therefore, to con-

sume herself in the flame which she had kindled for St. Florentin ; all her projects, both direct and indirect, miscarried alike. Often in the circle assembled at her father's, the Count di Molina, did she attempt, by partial attentions and allurements, to captivate the heart of the young Count Henry ; nor did she leave any stratagem unemployed to accomplish her purpose. It was visible to every body the politeness with which Henry returned all her courtesies, but there was not any thing that appeared like love in his behaviour, it was merely respect, and the usual galantries which men of his station were accustomed to use to the beauties of Italy.

Sometimes the Lady Madelina would seize a moment when a party was formed for walking, artfully to arrange it in such a way that St. Florentin would be compelled, according to all the rules of politeness, to offer her his arm. At

one of these times the Lady Madelina invented some pretext for separating from the company, and by a studied conversation, endeavoured to sound his inclinations, in the hope of obtaining, at least, something like a declaration of love, but in that she was completely disappointed; the same expedient was used several times, but with no better success. At length her vanity prompted her to the belief that, without doubt, the heart of Henry was previously engaged, otherwise how could it be possible that he could be able to resist her charms.

The idea of a rival having once taken possession of the mind of the proud Madelina, she viewed Henry only with the eye of resentment, and all the females who composed the parties of her mother, the Countess di Molina, with anger and jealousy. Vain, however, were her endeavours to get at the cause of his insensibility, and which were only used

as if to establish her own uneasiness : she was unable to discover who the person could be who was so much preferred. Henry was, however, in her estimation, a senseless being, ungrateful to her attentions, and unworthy of her regard ; in short, the perplexity of the haughty Madelina was great, and her desire of revenge knew no bounds.

Reduced, at length, to vague conjecture, all equally void of probability, and not knowing what contrivance to resort to next, it occurred to her to consult Montaltus, who would, perhaps, furnish her with a clue to the labyrinth in which she had been lost so long ; she was delighted with the expedient, and considered that her success would be certain.

During the interim of the delay the Lady Madelina suffered a fever of impatience : at one moment she affected a great flow of spirits, and the next

was depressed and sunk in a-melancholy reserve. The haughty Madelina scorned and neglected, was an idea that destroyed even her health, she pined for another cavalier to conquer ; but no triumph would now satisfy her, except that over the heart of the insensible St. Florentin.

CHAP. IX.

The wicked prosper.

It is too certain that envy is the vilest and most hateful of all the passions, and leads to the commission of the most atrocious crimes.

The Count Montorio having always represented to his son Montaltus, that Henry St. Florentin was the usurper of the advantages of fortune, to which he would have been entitled at the death of the Countess Agniolla, Montaltus felt the greatest dislike and a great deal of rancour against his half brother.

Montaltus was, in disposition, very like his father, the cruel and artful Montorio, though his person was very different, for he was inclined to be lusty, stooped in the shoulders, had a broad face, thick lips, and was besides lame of the right leg.

From education and habit, Montaltus had been fashioned to believe that there was not any consideration which ought to impede his fortune in life, and that every thing which opposed it was hateful, and should be destroyed; Montaltus became, therefore, very early versed in all the arts of the Count Montorio, his father, and even excelled him in that of dissimulation, for he could fawn so cunningly, as to make it pass for affection, and had gained the friendship of St. Florentin, by feigning sentiments totally foreign to his breast, while that excellent youth was constantly making him presents, which, so far from inspiring him with a sense of gratitude, only served to encrease his envy and malice, and contributed to make him a steady and determined enemy whenever the occasion offered.

Montaltus, continually occupied in watching over the actions of Henry, soon perceived that though a visible preference was shewn him by the Lady

Madelina; yet he received that distinguished mark of her favor with neglect and indifference.

Montaltus communicated to the Count Montorio the observations which he had made, and requested his advice and counsel how to act. The Count, without losing an instant, replied to the letter of his son, and wrote, that he ought to seize with avidity, such an opportunity of raising enemies so powerful against Henry, as the Lady Madelina and the Count di Molina, her father; to arrive at which end anonymous letters, malignant insinuations, false reports and calumnies of every description were all to be employed, provided that they could be put in force without Montaltus being suspected as the author, and that, above all things, he ought to preserve appearances, and make every one believe that he was the most affectionate of brothers and the sworn friend of Henry St. Florentin.

The Count Montorio also apprized

Montaltus of Henry having visited Lady Laurenta di Volturna, and expressed his hopes that it might ruin him with the Countess di Simonetta, which prospect of alliance he dwelt on as the most fatal obstacle. “Montaltus (concluded the Count) it is only for those who possess a superior genius to turn the circumstance, which appear most opposite to their views, most to their advantage: reflect on this. The conquest of which Henry St. Florentin is so vain, may contain the poison which will destroy him, it is for your skilful hand to administer it.

Montaltus that he might put his plans in force with as much plausibility as possible, from the specious instructions which he had received from the Count Montorio, commenced by secretly reporting that Henry paid his visits to the Lady Laurenta di Volturna, and had besides a favorite in Milan, who he saw as privately as possible, as she was humble, and the sister

of his servant; and the great kindness which Henry shewed for the honest Nicholas, gave some colour to the story.

The report spread amongst the cavaliers, soon reached the ears of the Count di Molina, who, one day, at a dinner, to which Henry had been invited, touched on the subject in an arch and sarcastic manner, but destitute of offence, and rallied him on his romantic passion for a young girl in Milan, and on the melancholy which he appeared to indulge from so pure and chaste an attachment.

Henry, who was ignorant of the source from whence these railleries had sprung, was fearful that the grand secret had gone abroad, and that the tale was invented by some person to injure him with Juliana; with that impression on his mind he faltered, and appeared confused at the very insinuation, which, at any other time, he would have received only with a smile, and was totally unable to defend himself.

The Count di Molina, who was a man accustomed to use a satire which his rank made safe for him to practice, continued his allusions and remarks during the whole time of dinner, and did not leave Henry scarcely a moment to arrange his replies.

The Lady Madelina, who at first imagined that the raillery of her father was merely to try the patience of the Count St. Florentin, began now really to think that he had a mistress at Milan, and the idea of the possibility of such a circumstance being true, increased the desire which she felt of procuring the best information on the subject from Montaltus.

An opportunity soon after presented itself for the satisfaction of Lady Madelina, at a dinner given to the Cavaliers by the Count di Molina.

The Lady Madelina managed the affair with her usual skill. In the evening she engaged the Count di Molina and Henry to play together at chess, a game

which is not soon over, and which requires all the attention. She contrived to leave the Countess in conversation with some of the ladies, and sought out for Montaltus, who was equally anxious for a conversation with her. At length she saw him among the croud, and seating herself on a couch at little distance, beckoned to him and requested that he would take a seat next her, as she had something very particular to say to him.

Montaltus and the lady Madelina being two persons alike influenced by the same motives, an insatiable curiosity, it may be easily conjectured that the conversation was very soon managed to turn on the subject of Henry St. Florentin. "They have made," said the Lady Madelina, "a most extraordinary report to my father, respecting Count Henry. They have told him, for a truth, that he is passionately in love with his own servant's sister, a poor ignorant girl. And they add, also, that he has honorable

views, and that he actually means to marry her.”

Montaltus replied, with an affectation of astonishment : “ Marry her ! Heaven forbid ! I had flattered myself with the belief that all the tales circulated to my dear St. Florentin’s discredit were false and malicious ; yet, at the same time,” added he, in a tone of important secrecy, “ It is certain that I have noticed, for some time past, that he has appeared more melancholy than usual, and that he is very indifferent to all the gaieties of the citadel of Ripalta. Indeed, his demeanour has all the appearance of a deep impression having been made on his heart, by some lady who is the constant subject of his contemplation ; but until now, I must confess, I attributed his despondency to a passion for a beautiful and charming object, and flattered myself with being shortly able to call by the name of sister, the most elegant and accomplished of women ;

one for whom I have the highest respect and veneration, and who has the adoration of all who know her. A bow of homage and respect did not leave the Lady Madelina a shadow of doubt on her mind that it was herself who was described in such flattering colours, and a slight tinge of crimson, for an instant, suffused her cheek. * However, as the Lady Madelina desired some further and more ample intelligence, she very artfully contrived to bring the same subject again on the carpet, and put several more direct questions to Montaltus; these he answered with considerable cunning, and with an air of ingeniously defending the reputation of his kinsman, managed to blacken it with the most abominable falsehoods; so that Madelina was undecided whether she should not entirely give up all thoughts of a conquest over the heart of the young and accomplished St. Florentin.

The diabolical imagination of Mon-

taltus, did not, however, suffer him to stop at the measure of injustice which he had already dealt out to Henry ; he prepared an anonymous letter, in which he insinuated that the Count St. Florentin actually intended to seduce his daughter, and to carry her off. It advised further, that the Count Molina should watch her narrowly, as it was more than probable that she would yield to the wishes of her seducer ; that he was the more dangerous and to be feared as it would not be his first affair of the kind ; that he had heaped complicated miseries on several families, and that he was, by no means a novice in the art of seduction, his adventures having already brought him into various dishonorable situations, and that he had, besides, an intrigue with the Lady Laurenta di Volturna.

The wretch Montaltus, after having congratulated himself on his ingenuity in the contrivance of the letter, found

an opportunity of placing it in the cabinet of the Count, in such a situation that he could not avoid seeing it. Immediately after the base Montaltus had had arranged his plan, he left the fatal business to work, satisfied in his own mind, that the ruin of his brother was already accomplished.

CHAP. X.

Abuse of Confidence.

WHILE Montaltus was engaged in the prosecution of his infamous scheme to destroy the happiness of the Count St. Florentin, the Count Montorio, his father, was by no means idle, for he remained behind in Milan, where, by his subtle arts and insinuations, he very soon procured the notice of the Duke de Montferrand, who gave him an introduction to the Marquis di Simonetta, which was the object he was the most desirous to achieve, and after the first interview with that haughty Italian, it was not difficult for him to understand his weakness and his pride. By the most servile flatteries Montaltus succeeded in gaining such an ascendancy over the Marquis, that, at length, it came to the point that he could not be

happy without taking his opinion and advice in every affair of consequence.

The Marquis di Simonetta, from the impressions which he had received, did not, however, consider Montorio as merely the most *able* of men, he believed him also one of the *best*, and honoured him with his complete confidence, he could not, therefore, resist making Montorio acquainted with the fears which he entertained of a correspondence being maintained between the Countess di Simonetta, his daughter, and the Count St. Florentin.

The Count Montorio heard the Marquis state his conjectures with the most violent marks of indignation. "It is," said he, "both the most infamous ingratitude and the most abominable presumption, that a man of St. Florentin's inferior rank and fortune should raise his pretensions to a lady of the high and illustrious family of Simonetta."

It was in such manner that the Count Montorio, flattering the pride

of the Marquis, obtained an absolute empire over his mind on every other subject. Grant but to the Marquis di Simonetta his great consequence in the scale of society and to every thing else he appeared alike indifferent, whether it included matters relating to his own happiness, or the happiness of his children. Indéed, the Count would have had the power of estranging him from his own daughter, if it had been consistent with his designs.

The first use, therefore, which the Count Montorio made of his influence was to slander the absent St. Florentin, and to paint him as the most execrable of beings, an intelligence which was but too gratefully received by the Marquis, who readily accepted every thing as true that could serve to flatter his own desires.

The Count Montorio did not hesitate to represent Henry as the vilest of Characters, as one who had, by the baseness of his conduct, broken the heart

of the best of mothers, and sent her to an untimely grave. But fearing that such loose, and uncertain accusations might make only a slight impression, he deemed it more likely to succeed by a narration of circumstances which could not fail of exciting the utmost alarm in the breast of the Marquis, but the communication was affected to be given under the seal of the most inviolable secrecy. "I know well, Sir," said the Count Montorio, "how superior you are to the prejudices of narrow minds, and therefore need not imagine for an instant that the misconduct of the wretched St. Florentin, my kinsman, can affect me in your esteem, feeling, as I do, the most profound and perfect respect for your high circumstance and rank in life. It is proper, however, for a nobleman of your distinction to be acquainted with the characters of all those who may approach him, and it is solely on that account, that I think myself absolved from any further necessity of

keeping silent on the subject of the Count St. Florentin. However painful, therefore, I feel it my duty to relate to you some events, which I could neither foresee nor prevent, but which, if it were possible, I would gladly efface from my memory."

The Marquis, with an air of considerable gravity and dignity, replied to the exordium of the Count Montorio: "Sir, a man of your character ought not suffer for the misconduct of his relatives; you may unbosom your mind to me, for you may rest assured that I know perfectly well how to appreciate your merit, and to do justice to the lively attachment which I believe you entertain for my interest and happiness." "If all men," returned the Count, "were endowed, Marquis, with your judgment and penetration, it would be for the safety and happiness of mankind, at large, but minds of your intelligence, Sir, are very rarely to be found, and the best motives are often misinterpreted

ormisunderstood. Nevertheless, I trust to the purity of my intentions, my frankness, Marquis, is sufficiently known to you already, permit me to add a proof of my zeal in disclosing circumstances which will give me agony while I detail them, but as I am honoured with your permission, I ought not to have any reserve."

After this insidious prelude, the Count Montorio entered into a narrative which he had fabricated for the purpose of impressing on the mind of the Marquis, that Henry St. Florentin had been the cause of the death of the Lady Agniolla, his mother, and which tale included the story of his having submitted to an insult from a stranger, and many other falsehoods calculated to injure and blacken the character of the unhappy St. Florentin, particularly his attachment for the Lady Laurenta di Volturna.

"You will easily conceive, Sir," said the Count, "that I have been obliged to use every precaution, lest these facts

should transpire, and hurt the reputation of my dear son, Montaltus, and after what I have said, you may judge how much I must have been concerned to find that Henry had insinuated himself into your good opinion, and that he had obtained, through your kind interference, a distinguished post in the army of Italy, and that 'without having the smallest right to expect it. Yes, he had reason to 'triumph over the modest merit of my son Montaltus, however, I am now happy to find that 'you are no longer a stranger to the true character of the man of whom it was important for you to know every particular. But I entreat, Marquis, that you may not divulge the secrets which I have told you to any one of your family, not even, for the present, to the excellent Lady Juliana di Simonetta, who it may be proper, should one day know the infamy of the man who has dared to look to the honor of her alliance. I detest him most of all," said

the Count Montorio, "for his hypocrisy, in daring to approach so pure a lady, after his midnight revels at the courtezans Victoria and Volturņa. It is well known," continued he, "that both the Prince Charles and the Prince Vicenzio abhor his character ; for dissolute as are the manners of those Princes, Marquis, there is a generous frankness about them, that place them above the meanness or disguise." "And is it possible," cried the Marquis di Simonetta, "that the Count St. Florentin paid his visits to those women at the time that he presumed on hopes of my daughter. Princes, indeed, may be excused their gallantries, for the alliances they make are of totally a different character to those of other people ; but the man who pretends that he seeks the hand of a lady purely from love, as they call it, is a wretch if he deceives her with such pretensions, while he frequents the haunts of a celebrated courtesan, and, indeed, Count Montorio, if I could think you mistaken in

any part of your statement it would be in that particular.

The Count Montorio, to establish his assertion, artfully entreated the Marquis to ask the Prince Vicentio whether he had not seen Henry at the Lady Victoria's, for he knew very well that Vicentio would gladly implicate him in any disgraceful scene.

The Marquis di Simonetta, who, until that moment, could only have been reproached with expressive pride, was so much enraged with St. Florentin at the misrepresentations of Montorio, that, forgetting every purity of conduct, and every proof of attachment and honor which he had discovered in the Count, he became perfectly convinced of the truth of all that he had heard, and burning with shame and disappointment at having rendered so considerable a service to such a man, and filled with indignation at his hypocrisy, he determined that he should
 51. never visit the Palace of Simonetta

again ; and still further, that if he could observe the slightest remains of inclination in the breast of his daughter towards him, that he would immediately compel her to take the veil in the Convent of the Ursulans.

Such was the state of affairs with the Marquis di Simonetta, who was still obliged, at times, to listen to the praises of St. Florentin from the lips of the Countesses di Barlemont and Albici ; and which, at length, became so irksome to him that he determined to leave his Palace at Vercelli and go into Piedmont.

The Marquis communicated his design to the Count Montorio, who, having received a pressing invitation to accompany him on his journey, and to remain some months at the Palace of Cavigno, was, by no means, averse to the scheme, and was, indeed, the more anxious that it should take place without delay, as he feared that the Countess di Barlemont, who esteemed Henry, might

suspect, from circumstances, that his character had been blackened, and would find means of justifying him to the world, which might prove the means of detecting his infamy, and expose him to the Marquis and the Duke di Montferraud. He did not, however, accompany the Marquis on his journey, as he did not chuse to travel in the same carriage with the Lady Juliana, whose mind, he was convinced, was too luminous and intelligent not to discover the baseness of his heart.

The Count Montorio, immediately on his arrival at the Palace of Cavigno, began to replace the web in which he hoped to entangle the good St. Florentin; he had, from the very first moment of his acquaintance with the Marquis di Simonetta, studied his disposition with the greatest attention, to endeavour to discover the weak points, being persuaded, from his own hateful experience, that any man might be made subservient to the designs of ano-

ther who had more art than himself ; if he could once acquire the knowledge of his predominant passion so as take advantage of it. Hence it was that he so easily succeeded in inspiring the Marquis, with contempt and hatred for the Count St. Florentin, who he ought to have esteemed ; and the facility, with which he had engaged him against that noble youth, increased his hopes, that, by flattering his pride, he might, in the end, be able to bring about an alliance between the Prince Vicentio di Gonzago and the Countess di Simonetta ; the accomplishment of such an object would answer a double purpose, as he would not only receive the recompense promised by the Prince, but would insure him with all the interest of the house of Simonetta, and complete the sum of vengeance against Henry St. Florentin ; by robbing him at once of his protector and mistress.

The invitation he had received to visit the Palace of Simonetta seemed to

favour these designs, and he left his son at Ripalta actively employed in measures to bring about the destruction of the Count St. Florentin ; there were thus two powerful engines at work to produce the same object, and seemed to leave their devoted victim no chance of escape.

CHAP. XI.

A new and important character introduced.

HENRY ST. FLORENTIN was engaged one day playing at chess with the Count di Molina, when a servant entered, who announced the arrival of the Princess di Stalma; the Count who was well acquainted with the ceremony of reception due to a Princess of the Royal Family of Germany, made his excuses to the Count St. Florentin, and left the apartment, to receive her as she alighted from her carriage.

The Count St. Florentin felt an ardent desire of knowing the Lady who had been announced, of whom he had heard spoken in terms of the highest admiration and respect, notwithstanding several extraordinary reports respecting her that were in circulation.

The Princess di Stalma, born in lower Germany, possessed all the virtues which characterise that nation; she had a heart full of milk of the human kindness, and a sensibility which had caused all the misfortunes which she had suffered in life. The Princess had contracted, in her youth, a regard for a nobleman of excellent mind and with an ample fortune, and which led to a secret marriage, as he was not, at the time, deemed an equal match for a Lady of such illustrious birth.

The marriage gave such offence, when discovered, to the relatives of the Princess di Stalma, that her husband was taken from her and thrown into a State Prison, and the Princess confined in a strong Castle on the banks of the Rhine.

Soon after the confinement of the Princess di Stalma she was delivered of a son, who was snatched from her embraces as soon as born and carried she knew not whither, it being pretended that the infant was not born alive.

After the event of the loss of her child, the captivity of the Princess did not last any time, respected and even adored by the guards who had the care of her person, frequent opportunities were given her of escaping from confinement, of one of which she at length took advantage, solely for the purpose of seeking for information as to the place of her husband's exile, and to endeavour to find some traces to the place in which they had concealed her child; for she could not easily believe the story which had been told her of its birth, as she had heard its cries.

One morning, the Princess di 'Stalma walked, as usual, on the ramparts of the Castle of Woldmar for air, and observed the centinels engaged in warm dispute among themselves, and the gate leading to the tower wide open, the Princess passed her guards unobserved, and had cleared the draw-bridge, when she was met by a trooper to whom her person was known. The Princess, with

tears gushing from her eyes, surrendered herself into his hands; the man was affected. “Madam,” said he, “pass on; I remember that you saved me once from a severe punishment for being absent from duty: I am a soldier and a man! My brother lives in the village—I will follow you thither. He will conceal you until the search that will be instantly made shall be over; he is faithful and honest, and will guard you, at the risk of his life, from every danger wherever you may go, trust yourself to his protection and parley here no longer.”

The Princess thanked the trooper for his kindness and attachment to her person, and reached the house of his brother, whither he soon followed and acquainted him with the precious charge entrusted to his care.

The Princess Stalma remained under the hospitable roof of the peasant a few days, during which a strict search was made, but the faithful trooper, ac-

quainted with every movement, instructed his Royal Mistress when she might depart, accompanied by the peasant who she took into her service.

The Princess set out immediately for Vienna, whither she arrived in safety, and threw herself at the feet of the Emperor Charles, to whom she was related by the ties of blood, and declared the motives of her escape, and in what manner she had been robbed of her child. The Emperor, equally noble, generous, and humane, gave her an asylum, with an establishment, and retinue suited to her rank; but would not lay his commands on her father to release her husband. The Princess, therefore, though received kindly by the Emperor, and removed from the horrors of solitary imprisonment, was far from happy, all her endeavours to obtain intelligence of either her husband or child were ineffectual, and she languished daily, suffering under the

painful uncertainty as to what had been their fate.

The traces of grief and anxiety were visible in 'the lovely face of the good Princess di Stalma, and though it was above twenty years since the event of her losing her husband, and although she had been frequently assured of his death yet she had not ceased to mourn ; prayer and meditation occupied her chiefly ; she was never seen in public, and her only recreation arose from the conversation of a few particular friends.

The Princess di Stalma's visits being chiefly to the poor and unfortunate. The Count Henry St. Florentin had never had an opportunity of meeting her, and was, therefore, very much pleased when the Count di Molina brought her into the room where he was. The Count St. Florentin, at her entrance, was very much struck with the majesty of her person and deportment, and felt an

awe and veneration for her, for which, having been accustomed to see people of her rank, he could not account ; in short, he was enrapt in the contemplation of her divine countenance, and his eyes were fixed on the lovely expression of a face impaired by sorrow.

As the Princess advanced, she directed her looks towards Henry St. Florentin, and a sudden distressing thought came across her ; she imagined that her own son, had he lived, would have been nearly of the same age, and, perhaps, like him ; the instantaneous impression took entire possession of her mind ; she started back, and the colour instantly forsook her cheek.

Such, however, were the manners and deportment of the Princess di Stalma, that the recollection only of an instant recalled her to the duties of courtesy ; she recovered herself, and, with her accustomed condescension, enquired who was the young officer who had retired from the saloon. The Count di

Molina made the Princess acquainted with Henry's name and rank, and requested permission to present him to her, at the same time speaking, in the most flattering terms, of his worth; for the truth was, that the Count di Molina possessed the generosity of a soldier, and had not suffered any impressions to be made on his mind by the reports which had been circulated to Henry's disadvantage; — the Count chose to judge for himself.

The Princess di Stalma expressed her wish to see Henry St. Florentin, and the Count di Molina sent a domestic to say that the commands of the Princess were for him to attend her immediately. Henry obeyed, and was introduced by the Count di Molina to her notice and protection.

The Princess received the Count St. Florentin with the most flattering condescension, who, as she observed him, became the more and more interested with his countenance; a sigh escaped

escaped her, and it was some time before she was able to resume the usual compliments of an introduction. At length, suffering under a great depression of spirits, with a weak and faltering voice, she concluded with some kind expressions, and wishes for his welfare, and granted him leave to visit at the palace, which she had taken during her residence at the town of Ripalta, whenever he might feel disposed to visit her.

The Count St. Florentin delighted and gratified with the permission, returned the Princess his acknowledgments, in the most handsome and respectful terms, and retired from her presence.

The Princess di Stalma remained some time in the saloon, absorbed in reflections, in which she was indulged by Count di Molina, who knew the state of her mind too well to interrupt them. At length her health being indifferent, and the business she had

come on, respecting some enquiries after her husband, being concluded, though but little to her satisfaction, she took her leave.

It was during the time that the Count di Molina and Henry St. Florentin were engaged with the Princess, that Montaltus found an opportunity of going into the closet of the Count di Molina, and of leaving in his cabinet the anonymous letter, with the foulest charges against his friend and benefactor—the Count St. Florentin.

After the wicked Montaltus had completed his unworthy exploit, and was stealing home to avoid suspicion, his base and jealous soul was tortured with the sight of Henry St. Florentin, with the Count di Molina, conducting the Princess di Stalma to her carriage, and to complete his mortification, he heard her renew her invitation, in the most pressing terms, for Henry to visit her at the palace.

Montaltus, on his return to his lodg-

ings, consoled himself with the flattering prospect of the success of his villany, which would not only destroy Henry in the family of the Count di Molina, but would have the additional triumph of blasting all his hopes of countenance and protection from the Princess di Stalma.

Henry returned to the saloon, and finding himself alone with the Lady Madelina, desired to converse with her on the usual terms of courtesy to which he had been always accustomed, never wishing his intentions to be misinterpreted into more than a desire to please. The Lady Madelina had not, however, any notion of such a general regard, and received his attentions with a degree of pride and haughtiness which astonished him, and indeed the whole of the company, who had, by this time, assembled to make their visits to the Countess di Molina.

The Count St. Florentin was, at first, determined to resent the behaviour of

the Lady Madelina, and lay her open the ridicule of the whole party, by satirical observations on her conduct and manners; however his natural goodness of heart, the respect which he owed to the sex in general, and particularly to the daughter of his commander, prevented him; he contented himself with making her a slight bow and retired to his lodgings to reflect at leisure, on the events of the day.

A more agreeable subject now occupied the mind of St. Florentin' in his closet, it was the image of the Princess di Stalma; never had he seen a more interesting countenance, it was that of his beloved Juliana, improved by all the circumstances of a knowledge of life, and the considerations of vicissitudes, scarcely ever acquired by any without a conflict, and seldom without a wound. Henry had heard partly the history of the unhappy Princess, and compared the circumstances with more than a common interest: yet, pleasing

as the picture was to the imagination of St. Florentin, that he might again experience the love of a mother, in the Princess di Stalma ; a deep melancholy succeeded, and he retired to rest, rather than to sleep.

CHAP. XII.

The Fabricated Letter,

HENRY St. Florentin had scarcely begun to taste something of repose, the next morning, before he was awakened by his faithful Nicholas, who brought in a letter, which had been sent by the Count di Molina requesting to see him.

Henry St. Florentin arose instantly, and returned an answer that he would do himself the honor to wait on the Count, within an hour. As, however, Henry was uneasy about the absence of Montaltus, who he had not seen for some days, he called, in his way, at his lodging to make enquiries respecting his health.

The base Montaltus turned pale at the entrance of St. Florentin into his

room, and, at first, imagined that all his diabolical plots had been discovered, and Henry, who could not avoid noticing the alteration of his looks, accosted him with the most friendly solicitude. Montaltus, although rejoiced at finding that his fears were groundless, could scarcely recover himself, at the instant, sufficiently to reply to the anxious concern after his welfare, expressed by the Count St. Florentin; ashamed and confounded as he was at the attempt at a studied hypocrisy, after the mischief which he had projected, and put into action against his friend: at length, however, he stammered out his thanks, and assured the Count that he had been for some days afflicted with a severe cold, and head-ach, which had confined him at home. Henry St. Florentin expressed himself, as he really was, very happy that Montaltus had recovered, and took his leave.

On the arrival of the Count St. Florentin at the citadel, he was immediately introduced to the Count di Molina, and instantly observed a stateliness and reserve in the manner of that officer, for which he could no ways account, but was struck as it were with a thunder-bolt, when he put into his hand the letter which had been fabricated by the infamous Montaltus.

Henry St. Florentin, on perusal of the fabricated letter, was completely at a loss what answer to make to the Count on the subject of the accusations which it contained, and could not imagine who could possibly have been the author of such calumnies: indeed he was so overwhelmed with astonishment, that he only half articulated incoherent sentences; it was a considerable time before he recovered himself sufficiently to say—"Sir, these accusations, and reproaches are new to me, they take me by surprise, I never gave any occasion

for them, and I hope that it may not be long before I shall be able to convince the Count di Molina as well as the world, that I have been most basely calumniated.

Whatever might have been the private opinion of the Count di Molina as to the guilt or innocence of Henry St. Florentin, he had so much courtesy and nobleness in his carriage that it would not suffer him to treat him with disrespect ; he only gravely replied, with his usual dignity, “ Sir, you have impressed us with such a favorable opinion, that I am extremely unwilling to suffer anything to disturb the sentiment of regard and friendship, which we have entertained ; nor should I suffer a letter from an unknown hand to have any impression at all, were not my daughter’s character and safety concerned : I wish most sincerely that you may be able to refute these charges, as well for our own sakes as yours.” In

saying these words, the Count made a formal bow, and Henry retired, with a mind filled with chagrin and anguish, taking with him the infamous fabricated letter to endeavour to discover the author.

CHAP. XIII.

The success of Artifice.

THE kind solicitude with which the Count St. Florentin had enquired after the health of Montaltus, had convinced him that he was not at all suspected : he did not, therefore, omit calling on the Count to watch his countenance, for the purpose of discovering what had been his reception from the Count di Molina.

The Count St. Florentin had only just returned, and the base, the cruel Montaltus had come prepared as soon as he should be convinced that the Count Molina had related to him the contents of the letter, to furnish him with a train of suggestions which could scarcely fail of fixing the suspicion on some other person.

Montaltus found the wretched Henry St. Florentin absorbed in reflections on all that had passed. Henry, who had not done any thing that could deserve the malice of any, could not bear the thought that there were people near him who hated him sufficiently to wish him ill, and the contemplation was most bitter to one who was utterly incapable himself of such infamous conduct.

Montaltus could not help trembling at the presence of the injured Henry, his sense of guilt took alarm again at the alteration in the countenance of St. Florentin, which he fancied bore all the marks of resentment and anger towards him ; he feared that he had now discovered who was the author of the fabricated letter, and repented, on the score of his own dread of danger and disgrace, that he had used the expedient ; he was, however, presently relieved from those horrors of a guilty

mind, alive to every, even remote incident that may lead to detection.

The generous St. Florentin, on the other hand, perceiving the agitation of mind under which Montaltus laboured, ascribed it immediately to a noble motive, and instantly endeavoured to dispell it, by inviting him to sit down, with his usual air of frankness and affection.

There is not any human being more insolent than he who imagines himself safe and secure in his villany, and who has succeeded in his artifices. Montaltus now re-assumed his consequence, and his mind, active in mischief, became instantly furnished with a succession of plots to complete the ruin of his friend, and that he might be able to occupy his attention sufficiently to prevent any prudent and prompt measures being adopted, to discover the assassin of his reputation, he invited him to go to his lodgings, to take some

refreshment, to which Henry, who, on his side, wished to divert his mind from too great a pressure of thought, and to relieve it, in some measure, by reposing confidence in a friend, readily consented: indeed there was not any body who could stand more in need of some adviser, to whom he might explain himself without restraint or reserve.

The countenance of the wretch Montaltus brightened with joy when St. Florentin accepted his invitation, which might have been easily mistaken, by the unsuspecting, for real affection and regard: it was, however, nothing more than a gleam of malicious joy, at the mere thought of the opportunity which it would afford him of drawing off Henry from a contemplation that might be dangerous to the success of the plans which he had newly engendered in his mind.

Among the comrades of Montaltus, there was one for whom he had the

same inveterate hatred that he had for Henry St. Florentin, he was an officer named Signior de Sabro, and who possessed nearly as black a heart as Montaltus himself; it was his courage which was the only good quality that he possessed, that made him hateful to the base and cowardly Montaltus. The Signor de Sabro stood in his way, and was formidable to him on every occasion. The Signior was the proudest of human beings, elated with his superior skill in arms, and the success which he had had in his gallantries with the beauties of Italy, and in love with his own person, which was handsome and well formed, he never submitted to any rival, and almost bore away to himself every triumph of gallantry, a circumstance which only served to increase the hatred of Montaltus, who, though ill shaped and of a forbidding countenance was possessed of the most ridiculous vanity.

The superiority of the Signior Sabro

in arms over his confederates occasioned him but too frequently to adopt an insolent tone, and to plume himself over the rest of his Cavaliers ; for such was his skill, address, and personal courage, that there were but very few who would contend with him, those who had the hardihood to do so, had fallen, or had been compelled to beg their lives at his hands.

Such was the character on whom Montaltus wished the suspicions of Henry St. Florentin to alight, and circumstances were but too favorable to his design ; for the Signior di Sabro had already entertained a tacit enmity against Henry, who he fancied to be a rival in the favour of the Lady Madelina, and who had, before his arrival, showed a preference for that Cavalier ; and, indeed, until the arrival of St. Florentin at the Castle, he had continued so, when her conduct towards him had entirely changed ; Henry, however,

had been so insensible, both to the lady and to the jealousy of the Signior di Sabro, that he had not even discovered its existence, nor had the Signior found, as yet, any opportunity of coming to an open rupture with him. Montaltus, however, was not ignorant of the dispositions of that Cavalier towards Henry, and gave himself great credit for having laid a plot which, in its completion, would most probably rid him of one, if not of both his rivals, by bringing them to a personal combat in arms; indeed, so certain was he of the event, that he actually wrote to the Count Montorio, who, in consequence of the intelligence, set out immediately for Ripalta.

Unhappily for themselves there are many who, like the wretched Montaltus, imagine malignity and mischief to be really skill, and judgment, a fatal error, which arises from viewing the success of artifice, without considering

that success is often the most fatal event that could happen for their views, and frequently produces the result they most dread. How many fall a sacrifice to their successes, and even suffer from the accomplishment of their own desires? Vice is a tree that may blossom, but seldom bears, and if it does, the fruit is poison; true advantage results from labour, or from the genius of the wise and good.

During the time of their repast the artful Montaltus took an opportunity of addressing the Count, "My dear Henry," said he, "you seem very thoughtful to day; I hope that there has not any thing disagreeable occurred." "I do not know, my brother," replied St. Florentin, "whether I ought to communicate the cause of my uneasiness to you, as it would only, my dear Montaltus, afflict you as severely as it does myself; but as your kind anxiety for my health and happiness

has made you discover an alteration in my looks, I will not attempt to conceal my uneasiness any longer from my friend. "Read this!" cried Henry, putting the anonymous letter into his hand, "and judge for yourself; it was given me by the Count di Molina, who sent for me expressly on the occasion; I have endeavoured, in vain, to conjecture who was the author of so diabolical a paper." "Ah! my dear," returned the wretch Montaltus, "you believe I see all the world to be like yourself and are above supposing any body capable of so wicked an action; but I think, St. Florentin, that I know this hand writing, and am a little surprised that it has not struck you as well as myself, although disguised; but can you be ignorant who it is you have supplanted in the favour of the Lady Madelina, since your arrival at Ripalta? you do not seem conscious that you have rivals who hate you for being

favoured with the esteem of the Countess di Simonetta, of whose character they speak." Henry did not permit Montaltus to finish his period. "Dare they!" said he, "to utter a syllable against the best of human beings; I entreat you, my dear Montaltus, not to let me remain in suspense any longer as to who the person is you think my rival, nor ignorant as to what he has presumed to say of the Lady di Simonetta." "I assure you, brother," replied Montaltus, "that I never heard any thing myself, and I should be sorry to impeach the character of any of our Cavaliers; and, above all, to lead you into a quarrel with any one who seeks, perhaps, the opportunity—it is possible that I may be mistaken; judge, however, for yourself; compare the hand writing of this letter and this paper," which last was a note that Montaltus had received from the Signior di Sabro, with an invite-

tion to accompany him to a notorious gaming-house, and indeed there was not any thing that could have served him better, at the instant, as it was from that very note that he had fabricated the anonymous letter. "They seem," continued Montaltus, "to be the same hand writing."

While Henry St. Florentin was engaged in a close examination of the letter and note, Montaltus continued speaking. "I never heard," said he, "the Signior di Sabro speak of you, except on the subject of the Lady Madelina, of whose indifference he once complained, and added that it was you who, by your arts, had supplanted him in her favour." "It is not," said he, "the loss of her person that I regret, or that I have reason to envy him; she is an artful woman, who certainly possesses some personal charms, but her great merit is her fortune." "I hope," added Montaltus, endeavouring to get

back the Signior di Sabro's letter, "that the epistle is not signed, or that you have not seen the signature of your enemy; give it me back I entreat you."

"I do not wish to retain it," said Henry, returning it to him, "I flatter myself, however, that you have not been to this infamous gaming-house."

"No, certainly not," returned Montaltus, "you know that these are places of strife and confusion, where the most circumspect stranger would lose his money, and you are sensible that I have not any to spare." "If you are in want, my dear Montaltus," replied Henry, promptly, "here is the key of my chest, go to my lodging and take whatever you may have occasion for, it is entirely at your service. Montaltus, however, declined his offer of kindness, as he had other business on hand, and Henry was about to take his leave, when Montaltus prevented him, and begged he would allow him to go

with him ; Henry returned his thanks to Montaltus ; but, to prevent his following him and his interference, requested that he would call for him to discharge a small debt which he owed in the town ; Montaltus did not want much persuasion, for although he was delighted at seeing that the business would be brought to a serious conclusion, yet he had no objection to be absent from a rencontre which he saw would terminate fatally.

Henry St. Florentin went immediately to seek his adversary, who was accustomed to rise late, and found him at home.—“ I am come, Cavalier,”—said he, in a firm tone, “ to demand the cause of the ingenious slanders which you have fabricated against me, and of your having spoken slightly of a lady, whose name I will never suffer any one to mention without respect.” “ It is mighty well Cavalier, *Adonis* !” returned the Signior di Sabro, with a

smile of contempt: go on, sir, what more have you to say? — I have not finished breakfast, and can listen to you with patience.” , I am glad of it,” answered Henry, “and as you profess to be a distinguished favourite of *Venus*, I should be glad of an opportunity of trying whether you are equally a favourite of *Mars*.” “Very entertaining, upon my word,” returned the Signior, “and pray what arms would you prefer in this affair?” “It is immaterial to me,” answered Henry, “what time will you be ready?” “Do not be in such haste,” returned the Signior di Sabro; “but tell me is it your sword which is to settle the business?” “The reputation, sir,” returned Henry, “which you have acquired in the science carries with it so little of terror to me, that I have brought mine, purposely, in my hand.” “Mine,” said di Sabro, “is not in such a violent hurry, but will attend

you presently." With these words he called his servant:—"Hugo," cried he, "this Cavalier will take me a walk with him, I do not know *exactly when* I shall return."

The Signior di Sabro, who valued himself on his skill, having been but too often successful, did not hesitate a moment to accompany Henry behind the walls of the citadel, which was but a small distance from the lodging.

The miscreant Montaltus had followed Henry at a distance, and watched in the street where the Signior resided, to observe the event, and was delighted with the success of his plot when he saw them come out together; Montaltus still followed, and having found a situation where he could view the combat without being seen, he remained at that spot with his servant Picardo, who he had called for in his way.

CHAP. XIV.

The Rencontre. — The skill of Signior di Sabro — Henry St. Florentin — The Stranger Friend.



THE Signior di Sabro, in the pride of heart, had made but an ill estimate of the skill and courage of St. Florentin whose unassuming demeanour and gentleness of carriage had made many believe that he was incapable of the hardihood of single combat ; Sabro had, it is true, to engage with an adversary whose least virtue was courage, for Henry was ever unwilling to bring his power into action. He was generous and humane, and full of awe and veneration for his holy religion ; yet his humanity did not prevent him from recourse to arms, like any other knight,

when his honour was concerned, or where the honour of those he loved and esteemed was at stake; he had never had cause to reproach himself with the name of aggressor; and what animated him to the present rencontre was the injury which he believed had been done to the chaste reputation of the amiable Countess di Simonetta.

Arrived at the spot which had been selected, the Cavaliers, animated with equal confidence of success, did not hesitate an instant to cross their swords, each of them seemed to wait the attack of the other. Henry, who was cool as he was brave, parried successfully several violent thrusts made by the proud impetuosity of his adversary, who seemed to disdain to use much science. The Signior was, however, astonished at the coolness of St. Florentin, and began to think that he had undervalued both his *skill* and *courage*; yet, however, he did not doubt his own

superiority, and changed his mode of attack, and retreated to draw Henry off his guard; he used, however, all the efforts of his art in vain. Henry had profited by the lessons of one of the most complete masters of the rapier at Milan, a native of France, and was invincible. At length, the Signior, grown furious with the play which St. Florentin had shewed him, made a violent lunge, which occasioned him to lose his guard, when immediately St. Florentin struck his sword out of his hand to a considerable distance, instantly dropping the point of his own to give time to his adversary to recover himself.

The confidence which Henry St. Florentin had displayed in the combat; his vigorous resistance and attack, altogether confounded the pride of the Signior, and opened his eyes to a greater danger than he had expected from so young a cavalier; he was, however,

mean enough, when he had gained his sword, to renew the combat ; his assurance, nevertheless, had forsaken him, and it was now too late for him to hope success ; it was easy for Henry to profit by his embarrassment, and his life was several times in his power ; it was not, however, in Henry's nature to take that forfeiture, he sought rather to triumph destitute of the effusion of blood. The almost exhausted di Sabro could now scarcely keep his guard ; Henry saw his weakness, and made a feint as seeming to yield to a desperate charge, but his antagonist would not venture another assault, and kept retreating from the sword of St. Florentin ; at length Henry, a second time, disarmed the Signior, who, frantic with rage, again flew to his sword ; but the opportunity of regaining it was denied him, a stranger, unobserved by the Cavaliers stepped forward — *It was the Stranger in the Red Mantle*, who, with

a determined air, placed his foot on the fallen sword and broke it into pieces, exclaiming to the Signior di Sabro:—
 “ Forbear, and in honour yield to St. Florentin;” with which words the stranger walked away with hasty steps, and Henry St. Florentin, turning to the Signior di Sabro, said, “ Revenge, Signior, has no charms for me; the honor of a virtuous woman, whose fair fame you have attempted to sully with the breath of scandal, was the first motive of my challenge, promise to repair the injury which you have done before those, in whose presence you uttered the slander, and disavow the story detailed in your letter to the Count di Molina.” Henry St. Florentin would have appealed to the stranger on this subject, but he had taken to the thickest part of the wood and was out of sight; as, however, the aspersions pretended to have been made on the character of the Countess di Simonetta,

originated in the fertile imagination of the monster Montaltus only, and as the letter to the Count di Molina had not been sent by the Signior, it was easy for him to answer both charges on the spot. "I am at a loss," said he, "Count Henry, to guess what you can possibly mean, and I hope that you have not given me all this trouble for nothing; in the first place, tell me what woman of virtue I have defamed! of whom do you speak?" "Of the Countess di Simonetta," replied Henry. "If it be so," answered the Signior, "you may be satisfied, as I never had the honour of knowing the lady, nor ever heard of her except from your friend and relative Montaltus, so that I am ready to clear her reputation in any place and at any time, if you can find the persons before whom I uttered the slander, who do not exist on this hemisphere, and as for any letter to the Count di Molina, I never gave myself *the trouble*

to write more than three lines at a time in my life. The proofs which you have given me of your courage, and of a skill almost equal to my own, and which gave you a chance of prevailing even against myself, compells me to give you this satisfaction, and makes me desirous of your friendship : but I must beg, 'Count,' that, in future, you never take me from my breakfast on such a fool's errand again." This condescension was more than St. Florentin had expected, and with the utmost frankness he immediately offered the Signor his hand, and they walked together towards the city, as if nothing had happened. The Signior, however, in the assault had received a wound in the sword arm of little consequence, but which he was obliged to tie up with his handkerchief to prevent an effusion of blood.

Montaltus was far from expecting the result of the rencontre; he could

not conjecture who was the mysterious Stranger who had interfered ; but his imagination was quickly at work how to turn even that circumstance to his advantage, and the first thing which he did was to plot with his servile attendant, that the Stranger was an assassin hired by Henry St. Florentin to murder the Signior, and that he would have profited by the circumstance of his dropping his sword, to run him through the body, if Picardo, the servant of Montaltus, had not suddenly come to the spot, when the assassin fled. To make sure of his accomplice, Montaltus gave money to his servant Picardo, with promises of further recompence if the story could be established.

The ingenious report circulated so rapidly, that it soon reached the ears of the Count di Molina, in whose mind the fabricated letter had made a deep impression, and contributed, in a great

measure, to produce the consequences desired by the base Montaltus.

Until this time Montaltus had been able to keep behind the curtain, to work his horrible machinery, he had now, however, some apprehensions that a mutual explanation of the parties themselves, might lay open the whole of the plot; he determined, at length, to agitate new mischief, while his servant, Picardo, should be engaged in a business of equally diabolical contrivance.

Montaltus called, as soon as he possibly could, on the Signior de Sabro, who he found at home, sufficiently disconcerted at the disgrace which he had experienced in the morning, but which he could have no idea had been already published abroad.

Montaltus accosted the Signior in an easy friendly manner, and began the conversation by saying, that he was extremely sorry to hear the reports which

were in circulation, which he took care to detail as had been agreed between him and Picardo, adding, "that he hoped, for the honor of his brother, the latter part, relative to an attempt at assassination, was not true, and that no third person had made his appearance, as it had been propagated." Although this was the first instant that such a thought had entered into the mind of the Signior, it was a circumstance too flattering to his vanity for him to abandon, and he was base enough to make a ready use of the falsehood. The appearance of the Stranger muffled in a Red Mantle, his breaking his sword, and the circumstances altogether might have occasioned any person, looking on, much doubt and perplexity, and might have been taken for the attack of two assassins on one individual.

The Signior de Sabro' indulged the idea that such a turn had been given to the affair, as would entirely save his

reputation for courage and skill in the use of the rapier, for which he had been extolled, and he was mean enough to entertain the cruel lie against the honor of the brave St. Florentin.

Montaltus continued—"As the brother of the accused, it is necessary that I should advise with you. The greater part of the Cavaliers of the garrison were with the Count di Molina, when the news of the rencontre arrived. I am much concerned to state that by some fatal chance, my servant was, by, and near enough to witness the whole affair: there was, Signior, doubtless some plan to destroy you, and an assassin employed: would to heaven that Picardo had told me the circumstance before he had spread the story among his comrades, I might then have consulted with you how to have saved a brother from ruin. I do not, Signior, wish to press you to answer any questions in this unfortunate affair, for I

dread what must be your answer: no, I will remain ignorant of particulars until the first impulse of your resentment may be subsided; yet if I might ask you to say as little as possible of the affair at present, I would entreat that much from your lenity.

It was with such an air of candour and regard for the honor of the Signior di Sabro, and the safety of his brother, that Montaltus entreated the silence of the Signior, for the present, on the subject of the rencontre, that he affected to yield a ready complianoe; indeed the Signior who, though not so completely depraved as Montaltus, felt a considerable degree of pleasure at the thought of being amply revenged for the humiliation which he had experienced, and that to be effected by his merely remaining silent on the subject, if called on—"There is no doubt, Sir," said the Signor di Sabro, with a haughty air, "but there was some-

where a design to destroy me, and, as I am wounded, it is my intention to keep my chamber for a few days, and if any measures should, in the mean time, be taken against your brother, on account of an attempt at assassination, you may rely on my honor, that I will rather discountenance the probability of such a base expedient having been intended by him, than yield to the suggestion; nevertheless it will not be in my power to draw a veil over the truth, as your servant, Picardo, was a spectator of the affair, and is entirely disinterested."

Montaltus thanked the Signior di Sabro for his kindness to his brother, but at the same time observed "that, unless he should be able to clear up who the Stranger was, who had immediately absconded, after having broken the Signior's sword, he should never acknowledge him for a relation. It is doubtless," said he, "a mysterious affair, and I am afraid, Signior, that your

life would have been lost, if the assassin had not noticed the approach of my servant.

Montaltus now made himself secure from the conversation which he had had with the Signior de Sabro, that he would be discreet and silent on the subject of the rencontre and keep in doors for some time..

CHAP. XV.

The advice of Enemies never to be taken.

MONTALTUS had no sooner left the Signior than he hastened to the Count Montorio, who had just arrived at Ripalta, seasonably enough to assist in the treachery of his son. Montaltus related circumstantially all that had passed, and proposed that they should immediately pay their visit to the Count St. Florentin, which, however, was delayed by Montorio's entering into a detail of the visit which he had just paid the Count di Molina. "It was," said he, "from him that I learned the success of your plans; but thought it best to observe a profound silence: the Count, however, told me that he had thought it his duty to issue

an order that Henry might be put under an arrest; that in consequence, however of the regard which he had once entertained for that young man, and the respect which he had for his relatives, he had taken care that the order should not be put in force for a day or two, and that it was my duty, as his nearest relative, to apprise him of his danger and to advise him for the best."

"It was impossible," continued Monterio, "to misinterpret the kind views of the Count Molina, and as it answers exactly our purpose, with regard to Henry, let us go immediately to him; alarm his mind with the sense of danger and disgrace, and prevail on him to accompany us immediately to my castle, at Rivotelo, for it is most likely if he remains here, he will be able to justify himself. Flight, on the other hand, will complete his ruin, and fix on him, at once, the guilt and infamy of which he is accused."

The Count Montorio and his son, Montaltus, found Henry in the most distressful situation ; abandoned, as it were, by every friend, and in an attitude of melancholy contemplation, he was insensible of their introduction into his room, absorbed, as he was, in reflections on the extraordinary events of the morning, although he was far from suspecting the extent of the mischief, and the dreadful reverse he was about to experience in his fortunes, and which had been accomplished through the malice of his enemies.

As soon as Henry St. Florentin heard the names of Montorio and Montaltus, he arose, and advanced to shake hands with the Count Montorio, in whose face he looked with such an expression of sadness, that it would almost have deterred the most hardened miscreant from the perpetration of his design. The Count, however, only affected to be quite out of breath with some im-

portant. affair, in which he felt the most lively interest on Henry's account, "My dear St. Florentin," said he, "you are lost if you do not instantly quit this place. I am just come from the Count di Molina : you are accused before him and the whole citadel with having planned the assassination of the Signior di Sabro, and there are witnesses ready to appear against you : I have seen the warrant for your arrest, and the friendly intimation given me by the Count di Molina, that it would not be put in force before to-morrow, was doubtless from the best of motives. I have certainly no doubt in my own mind, but that there must be some mistake in the affair, and that you are innocent, but the immediate danger is great, and you would be guilty of the highest act of imprudence if you do not, for a season at least, seek a refuge that you may gain sufficient time to take the necessary steps for your justi-

fication. Our regard for you, my dear Henry, determined us not to lose a moment in giving you this information and to offer you an asylum at an old castle, which has been for more than two centuries in the family, and is situated in a retired part of the Veronese territory ; no one will ever suspect that you are there, and you may then write to the Count di Molina a statement of the whole affair, previous to your return to Milan, to defend the infamous charges brought against you respecting the attempt at the assassination of the Signor di Sabro.

Henry St. Florentin, in the instant, revolted against so foul and unjust an accusation, but much more against the proposal for him to fly from justice, at a moment when his presence was necessary to justify his conduct, and when his absence would be a confirmation of his guilt. It was, however, easy for the wretch Montaltus to remove every

objection in a mind that was innocent and free from suspicion ; he observed, with an appearance of the utmost candour, “ that, without doubt, the absence of a few days would be sufficient for his justification ; but that, if he persisted in remaining in Ripalta, he would be arrested as a criminal, which was alone a sufficient humiliation ; and that if he was once thrown into prison, he would be deprived of the proofs necessary to his complete acquittal. That the charge could only have been supported by some dangerous and powerful enemy, as was plain from the circumstance of the fabricated letter ; and that if the trial took place immediately they would produce witnesses against him, whom he could only oppose his own declarations of innocence, which would not be admitted, and that if he would absent himself a short time, his friends would be active in finding out some clue to the detection of his adver-

saries." The artful Montaltus entreated that, if he would not take some necessary precautions in the business, for his own sake, he ought not to refuse to do it for the sake of his friends; and who were as much interested in his honor as himself, and being his relatives, implicated in the disgrace.— "What," cried Montaltus, "will the Lady di Simonetta suffer; when she hears that you are confined as a culprit; what will become of her? I believe that you love her; I am persuaded that her affections are fixed on you. If you will not, therefore, take the steps for my sake, take them for hers; and preserve, at once, your safety and your honor."

The unhappy St. Florentin could not withstand the force of the last appeal; but, overpowered by the persuasions of the cruel Montaltus, his reason became silenced, and he suffered himself to be led to a carriage which was in waiting

purposely to assist the designs of his enemies.

The Count Montorio travelled day and night, that he might reach the castle of Montello, as he pretended, before any orders could be issued to prevent Henry leaving the province; and during the journey, both him and Montaltus endeavoured to amuse their victim, by the most pleasing and attentive language, and assurances that he would be able to return to the citadel at Ripalta, in a very few days.

Montaltus returned to Ripalta for the purpose, as he pretended, of learning all the news he could on Henry's subject, and of making faithful reports to him of every circumstance: but the truth was, he returned thither that he might devise more mischief, and write to the Count Montorio, the progress which he made in his operations.

During this interval, the Count di Molina, who had been deceived by the

reports against Henry, gave the order for his arrest, and was partly convinced of his guilt, when he was told that he could not be found. A reward was, therefore, issued for his apprehension, and a dispatch was sent to the Court of Prince Charles, for instructions on the subject.

CHAP. XVI.

Montaltus and the Marchesina Amphislisia prevail on the Prince Charles to order a Court of Enquiry into the conduct of Henry.

WHILE Henry St. Florentin' was in the care of the most inveterate of his enemies, his regiment, according to orders which had been received from the state of Milan, prepared to march to Soccata, a place within a few miles of the Marquis di Simonetta.

The Count Montorio was no sooner made acquainted with this movement, than he determined to return to the palace di Simonetta, that he might be near his son Montaltus, for the prosecution of their future plans, and having received a dispatch from him with

the news of the removal of the regiment, he persuaded Henry to remain at the castle until their return, and left with him a domestic who was in all their schemes, and who was to be a spy over his actions.

Montaltus, among other news, had written that the cavaliers were not at all satisfied with the evidence produced against Henry, and that all the plans of the Count Montorio and himself, would have failed, if they had not succeeded in persuading Henry to have fled from Ripalta; that now no doubt remained of his guilt, and that he absconded to escape the punishment, which he had deserved. The Count di Molina had thought it advisable to call a council, and no friends appearing for Henry, the accusation seemed fully established. "The affected silence of the Signior di Sabro," continued Montaltus, in his dispatch, "who was interrogated in his apartment, added weight

to the charge, as his conduct was considered brave and humane; such" continued Montaltus, "is the present state of affairs, we have only to guard against the possibility of any letter arriving at this place from St. Florentin." But of that Montorio had taken good care, as the domestic he had left, had strict orders, and liberal rewards, to intercept every dispatch, and send them to Montorio himself.

The Count Montorio and his son Montaltus having succeeded so far, had not only to appear unconscious of any thing like self reproach, but had to affect a deep sensibility at the unworthy conduct of so near a relative. They had now arrived at the point they aimed at, and made sure of the great secret remaining undivulged: there was only one person who could betray them, the domestic of Montaltus, and him they did not fear; as, besides the money which they had already given him, they

granted him a yearly sum, but at their pleasure, and which could be recalled at any time; they had not, therefore, the least doubt of his discretion and fidelity; they also flattered themselves that the Signior di Sabro would never undertake the justification of Henry, as on the secret depended his own reputation as a cavalier. The minds of both Montorio and his son were, therefore, set at ease, and the Count had only to improve his plot, for gaining the entire confidence of the Marquis di Simonetta, and to induce him to compel his daughter to the marriage with the Prince Vicentio, who continued to write to her in terms of the greatest adulation, and with the assistance of Montaltus, to acquire an ascendance and gain an interest in her mind, by the most finished affectation of virtue and devotion.

In the mean time the anger of the Count di Molina, who was a good tempered man, abated considerably to-

wards Henry, and disbelieving, in his own mind, with the rest of the officers, the story of the attempt at assassination, he would have entirely suppressed his resentment; and did so, to the extent of giving up all idea of making that circumstance a serious charge; he could not, however, prevent an inquiry into the fact of Henry's having abandoned his duty, at a time too, when they expected an attack from the French, who had entered the adjoining provinces.

The Count Montorio, however, who had the marriage of the Prince Vicentio with the object of Henry's regard, in view, was determined to destroy utterly the character and hopes of St. Florentin; he wrote, therefore, to Prince Charles a narrative of the whole affair, pretending that he wished an inquiry for the purpose of vindicating his relative, Henry, from the foul charge made openly against him, at the same time suppressing the fact, that the servant of

the infamous Montaltus was 'the only evidence to be produced against him."

The Prince Charles, on receipt of the dispatch, conferred with the Marchesina Amphilisia on the subject, who immediately saw the project, and advised the Prince to command the Count Molina to call a council of inquiry ; she hated St. Florentin in her heart, as his manners were too pure for the sensualites she indulged, and she calculated, therefore, that he could never be of service to her ; but that, if he gained an influence in the Count of Milan, it might produce a reform in the manners, fatal to the gallantries of herself and her train. The Prince stated some objections to such a public tribunal on the score of the improbability of the charge against a Cavalier of Henry's character ; but the Marchioness, in a light, but artful way, hinted that the Count St. Florentin had an intrigue with Victoria and Laurenta di Volturna.

after which he might be suspected of being capable of any thing, which last insinuation served the double purpose of poisoning the mind of the Prince against the Lady Laurenta, of whose influence she was a little jealous, although, to the Lady's face, she always pretended affection and kindness ; such is the deceit of women of depraved habits ; they detest each other, and the absence of any one of them is the signal for a general and cruel censure ; let that one, however, enter the room, and she is immediately caressed by, perhaps, her greatest enemy and slanderer. There is not any sincerity among the wicked, except in their malice, and that is too much concealed to be sufficiently guarded against.

The Prince wrote a dispatch the next day to the Count di Molina, to call the Court of Inquiry, and sent, at the same time, a letter to Montorio, full of expressions of concern for all that had happened.

CHAP. XVII.

The Council.—Sentence about to be pronounced. — The appearance of the Stranger Friend.



THE Count di Molina, on receipt of the dispatch from the Prince Charles, summoned a council of all the officers of the Fortress of Ripalta, to consider of the conduct of the Count St. Florentin, and to come to a decision respecting him, as their allegiance to the Prince and the State of Milan might demand. The Count Montaltus and his *infamous domestic*, Picardo, were also summoned as witnesses.

On the day appointed the council met in the audience-chamber, and the Duke di Montferrand, attended by several commanders, arrived to take his place as president.

The story of the attempted assassination had made considerable noise at Ripalta, so that the Castle was crowded by a number of persons who had gained admittance to hear the charges produced against the unfortunate Henry St. Florentin, who was generally beloved. Many distinguished ladies, of the adjoining States, were also present, and the Princess di Stalma took her seat on the bench next to the Duke of Montferrand, while her lovely and expressive countenance pictured all that could be imagined, of anxiety, hope, pity, and humanity.

The council having taken their seats, a herald summoned the Count St. Florentin, three times, to appear, to answer to the charges against him; the unhappy St. Florentin, who was ignorant of all that was passing against him, from his having had every dispatch of consequence intercepted, was absent; nor did any friendly Cavalier

appear for him, to refute the accusation which was read aloud.

The Duke di Montferrand, after the charges had been made, addressed the Council, telling them, as the Count was not present to enter on his defence, the extent of their deliberations must be on the single charge of his having abandoned his duty at a time when the state demanded his services; that the witnesses might be examined as to the probable cause of his flight, and that those circumstances, being more or less disgraceful, would weigh in their minds when sentence was to be pronounced, and that the states sentenced a cavalier to death, who, from cowardice, or without sufficient reason, fled from his duty.

The Princess di Stalma, as the Duke uttered the last words, turned pale, and her fine eyes filled, in an instant, with the purest tears of compassion.

The Duke added, looking at the Princess di Stalma, as if he had caught

the sentiment from her, that he hoped and believed that the Count St. Florentin was free from any thing like cowardice, and that no friendly disposition to their enemies had occasioned his flight.

The Count Montaltus was the first examined, and managed to display so much apparent reluctance in giving his evidence, and so much love of truth, that the whole council were deceived, and began to entertain the most unfavorable impressions of Henry St. Florentin. The Signior di Sabro was not examined, but the wicked Picardo was next called, and though well instructed by his master, was not quite so collected and composed as might have been expected; he faltered, and his story was full of contradictions; all this, however, was considered as the effects of timidity and ignorance, and it certainly did appear that something disgraceful had caused the flight of the Count St. Florentin.

The council retired awhile to an adjoining chamber, for the purpose of deliberating on their sentence, while the Cavaliers, who were anxious for the fate of their comrade, remained in suspense as to the event.

Presently the judge, the Duke di Montferrand, entered, and was ascending the steps of the seat of justice, when the herald, with the sound of the trumpet, again summoned the Count Henry St. Florentin.

Not any one having answered, the Duke handed a scroll to an officer of the Court—it was the decree; the officer unrolled it, and was preparing to read aloud, when a bustle and noise was heard without, and the croud made way for a stranger of dignified deportment, *habited in a Red Mantle*, partly concealing his face.

The Stranger advanced immediately forward, and bowing respectfully to the Duke, ascended the steps of the seat of justice, and put a scroll in his hand.

The Duke cast his eyes on the parchment, and then, with a look of surprise and respect, bowed with homage to the Stranger.

The whole council were in amazement at the interruption, and waited the issue with impatience, while the Stranger, with the same graceful deportment with which he had entered, stepped back and retired.

The Stranger in the Red Mantle was no sooner gone, than the officer prepared again to read the decree, from which he had been prevented during the interruption; he had only, however, proclaimed silence, when the Duke broke up the Court with these words—

“Suspend the sentence of the Count St. Florentin.”

A dispatch was immediately sent, by the Duke di Montferrand, to the Prince, which was forwarded to the Palace of Trezzo.

CHAP. XVIII.

The disappointment of Montorio and Montaltus—they visit the Marquis di Simonetta.—The progress they make. The uneasiness of the Marquis respecting his Son Count Cesar.—The Marquis on the point of Marrying his Daughter, to the Prince Vicentio.

MONTALTUS retired from the Council of Inquiry, sick at heart, at the unexpected result of its determinations ; he was at a loss, even to form the most distant conjectures, who the Stranger could be who appeared, at the instant, to save the Count St. Florentin ; he was, however, convinced, in his own mind, that nothing short of the royal command could have arrested a decree of the Court ; but the more he considered the affair, the more he found himself bewildered in amazement : he could

not easily believe that the Prince Charles had arrested the proceedings, for every thing was in contradiction to that surmise; he knew that the Prince Charles had, himself, commanded the council to meet, and decide on the conduct of Henry.

Montaltus set out immediately for the Palace of Bullafora, to see his father, and relate the extraordinary event which had occurred, to disappoint their views; Montorio, however, could not assist him in unravelling the mystery, except that he suggested, that some favourite of the Prince Charles had persuaded him to change his determination.

The Countess Juliana had suffered the greatest distress of mind at the disgraceful tales which had been repeated continually in her ears, of the misconduct of Henry; his silence she could no way account for, as the Marquis pretended to make it a point of courtesy never to open her letters, and she

had expected that he would have written to her as a friend. She began, therefore, to entertain the most painful apprehensions, that he had been guilty of some of the charges against him, and her repose and health suffered from the continual dread which hung upon her mind.

The Marquis di Simonetta, assisted by Montorio and Montaltus, lost no one occasion of degrading Henry St. Florentin's name before the Countess; he had, nevertheless, a strong advocate in her sensible mind and generous heart; she would not suffer her understanding to be imposed on, by mere histories, in the absence of the person they defamed; whatever she feared, Henry was, in strict justice, innocent, in her mind, against all the enemies who decried him, nor had her father's opinions the weight they would have had if she had found him directed by that high sense of honour, which formerly governed even his haughty mind, and

which she observed was considerably relaxed since his intimacy with Montorio.

The infamous Montaltus was unable to make the least progress in the favour or esteem of the Countess Juliana ; that excellent lady had the rare talent of distinguishing a character, from the exterior appearance of one, she had early detected his hypocrisy, and when he spoke of his regard for virtue, and his veneration for religion, she saw, from his averted and down-cast eyes, which dare not meet her own, that it was a wicked disguise.

With the Marquis, however, considerable progress was made, by Montorio and Montaltus, to whom he always resorted for advice and consolation, in every affair of moment or uneasiness. The Marquis had now been three years without any intelligence of his son, Count Cesar, and began to entertain apprehensions that he must have perished in a galley belonging to the

Italian States, which had been lost with a great number of passengers on board.

The Marquis di Simonetta, in the state of mind which he was in, was dependant, in a great measure, on the company of Montorio and Montaltus for any dissipation of the gloom which hung over him, and which gave them the complete ascendancy over his actions.

About this time the Prince Vicentio di Gonzago sent a dispatch to the Marquis di Simonetta, at the castle of Balafra, intimating his intention of paying a visit to the Marquis di Simonetta, he also wrote to Montaltus, requiring it of him, to sound the inclinations of the Countess Juliana towards him, accompanied by a large present, with the promise of an employ of the highest consequence, in case he succeeded in removing the scruples of the Lady Juliana.

This dispatch made a considerable impulse in the mind of Montaltus,

who became determined immediately to achieve the object of the Prince ; he consulted, therefore, with the Count Montaltus, and by his advice proceeded to act on his instructions instantly. It was at dinner that he entered into a long eulogium on the virtues of the Prince Vicentio, which appeared, however, to have so little effect on the Lady Juliana, that the Marquis thought it necessary to say—" You hear, Madam, what the Count Montaltus says of the Prince, and it is the language of all who know him ! I have received a dispatch, and I may tell you before these cavaliers, who are my bosom friends, that the royal nuptials are to take place immediately. It must give you pleasure to hear the Prince so highly spoken of." " The commands of my father shall be obeyed," replied the Countess di Simonetta, " when they forbid my espousal with any Prince or Lord, who desires the alliance ; but, I hope, that my father will not compel me to a mar-

riage with the Prince Vicentio, who I dislike too much ever to accept for a husband." The Marquis, as the Lady Juliana uttered her aversion and disgust, interrupted her by saying—"I know the disgraceful attachment which occupies your thoughts, but you will recollect that that unworthy object is too much disgraced ever to venture to renew his suit; I shall expect that you prepare to receive the Prince, not with mere ceremony, but with the regards due to a man who is to be your husband.

The artful Montaltus pursued the subject—"I had not any idea," cried he, "that the Prince Vicentio meant to place the sceptre of Mantua in the hands of Lady Juliana—he cannot confer that honour any where so well."

"I shall be happy, Madam," cried Montorio, "to offer my share of the honors and homage that will be paid to the Duchess of Mantua, on her ascension to the dignity."

The Countess di Simonetta retired as soon as possible from the repast; her mind distressed with the contemplation of a frightful futurity, which threatened to destroy her happiness: she hastened to the offertory of the castle, and prayed devoutly to the Almighty to avert the evils which surrounded her.

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